PARTISAN REVIEW

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Where Anarchy Begins: Dialogue from a Novel

NICCOLÒ TUCCI

"ME, AN ANARCHIST?" shouted Tiburzio in the face of his American nephew, while his wife was closing the window to keep people in the street from overhearing him.

"Of course, of course, you would call me an anarchist. You *should* call me an anarchist, in fact you should, for otherwise there would be something wrong with you. But let me tell you this: I agree that there must be a limit to all things. There was a limit even to the patience of Jesus Christ. One nice day He, too, the symbol of Infinite Love and Meekness, had to stop talking love and meekness and grab the whip. It is only natural. Everything knows a limit: love, sacrifice, liberty, just everything. Agreed?"

"Yes. . . ."

"Now wait. According to the totalitarian mind, and also, one should add, according to the unheroic, fearful bourgeois, there is only ONE exception. That exception is order. Yes, order, for the protection of the individual. Why in hell such people as heroic totalitarians and peace-loving bourgeois should be the only ones in the world to be geared to the Infinite, I cannot understand. But they are; they are, more than Christ. They love mankind so much that they tremble at the mere thought of mankind getting hurt for lack of sufficient order in the world. Jesus Christ was practical, but they are such idealists that their love knows no limits. Sleepless are their nights and anguished their dreams: they are always thinking of us, their beloved flock. Then, absentmindedly, in the hours that others devote to playing, they grab millions and wage nice little imperialist wars. The industrialists, who also love order for our sake, have other diversions: in the few hours of respite from the love of mankind that devours them, they absentmindedly manufacture automobiles, airplanes, iceboxes and other harmless gadgets: that is their favorite little game, poor darlings. Now tell me, What will these lovers of mankind do upon discovering that the individual is better protected than anywhere else

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between six boards of pinewood nailed together? In our glorious age, all you have to do to be called an anarchist is to ask the State as timidly as you please: Will you kindly step off my chest so I can breathe!

"You must never do that, my friend, if you are a law-abiding citizen. Don't ever insult the State with such tactless requests. Remember: it's safer to have ten policemen in your bed than one lone burglar ten miles away. The policemen protect you, but, of course, you must pay for the protection. It's a service after all, and you at least feel secure. . . . But even if the policemen should suddenly vanish, the burglar would hardly feel tempted to visit you: he knows that there would be nothing left for him to feed on. Now, honestly, isn't it much better to invest all you have in protection than to be robbed by unknown people who break into your house at night ready to do anything if you should scream for help? With the policemen it's different. There is no need to scream, as you know them all. And you're glad to pay, because you're a patriot. And what have you lost? Privacy? Privacy, hell! What is privacy, anyway? A selfish, unpatriotic condition."

"You don't seem to believe in order at all," said Aristide, timorously.

"How can you say that?" shouted Tiburzio so loudly that the windows vibrated. His wife ran out of the room crying, "Santo Dio, Santo Dio," as if she were summoning the maid.

"Do you think," yelled Tiburzio, clapping his hands to make more noise, "do you think that I would be scared as all that if I didn't believe in order? I don't believe in the Devil, but in Order I do. When Order takes over, it must also take over the undisciplined activities of such small artisans of theft as burglars and other dilettantes of the same kind. It cannot eliminate them, it only fixes them in a system of security."

"Why?"

"Why? Did you say WHY? Hear this fool ask why! Is that possible? Why, he says! Why! . . . "

"We in America," began Aristide, speaking like a valedictorian at commencement exercises and pausing significantly before and after every word, "We in America believe in asking why at all times. . . . So I am asking why."

"All right," said Tiburzio, his hands dancing above his head like creatures on their own, "then do ask why; but with more energy, curse the cap of Pio Nono. Ask your questions, ask them, don't just mumble why. You want to know why? Well, I'll tell you why. Be-

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cause the fascist state is REALISTIC. It looks at things AS THEY ARE. Theft is part of reality, so it is taken over and regulated. The only change is from dilettantism to science. You are not insured against theft, you are insured against surprise. Nothing will scare you, which, you will admit, is excellent for people with a heart condition. The unexpected is banished from life. You know exactly what to expect, and you don't waste your time in vain hopes and fears."

"But then. . . . "

"Then hell. Don't interrupt me. I am here to explain what the social sciences are all about, and you disturb the course of my thought. Now follow me: what must the citizen do in order to be insured against surprise, against the peril of breathing? He must declare. The State must know who you are; it's only logical, isn't it? So your parents begin to declare for you until such time as you're able to do it for yourself. As you grow up you're taught to declare the date of your birth, your name, those of your parents, everything. You fill out application blanks and forms, which cost you two or three lire a sheet, because you're a patriot, and you write and re-write your name hundreds of times to all sorts of authorities. But while you keep introducing yourself to the State, your introduction is never acknowledged. The authorities never declare anything to you, except their intention to go on protecting you for the rest of your life, and you must be grateful to them, because, you see, even the work of putting you in chains is in itself a job, a service again. Thousands upon thousands of policemen and name-readers and librarians who classify your declarations and pass them on to the Anatomists of the Body Politic, who can tell on sight in what archives your declaration will have to be kept against burglars and invaders, all these people are in the service of the Fatherland, to help you and protect you against the Peril. They don't know how and where it all started any more than you or I know who was the first man. And the hell they care. A thought lost in the thickness of the past has become a huge fact, and this fact has authority and power now. It has become Nature. It's the Paper Age. You go into an office and ask for a copy of one of your old declarations, and you find there hundreds of people applying for the same paper which they had won with the sweat of their pen years before, and for which they got nothing but protection. And there, behind a counter, you see a bunch of ill-fed and decalcified bureaucrats whose only privilege in life is that of living very close to the Forms. They can ACTUALLY touch and handle hundreds of brand-new application blanks whenever they want; they can make their own declarations while lying in bed, and re-write them ten times

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if they don't like their own handwriting; their wives can write the list for the grocer on those sacred papers, their children can play with them, and these things are enough to give the entire family a sense of power which makes them forget the misery of their daily existence. And they are powerful, too. Rich and poor alike will have to come to their counter and be polite, because these people, the Paper Eaters, are a privileged class: they hold the keys to the Paradise of Declarations.

"The first thing they will tell you, with a terrible scowl on their faces, is to be patient. Now, what else have you been all your life if not patient? Do you really think that without a long training in patience you would have been able to reach that stage of your life as a Declarer? Indeed not. And on top of it all you are reproached for being impatient. So while the victims of the Beast reproach one another for the same fate that persecutes them all, the currency of gratitude for the received Protection keeps the credit of the State high."

"It seems to me," said Aristide, while his uncle was taking a deep breath as if he had really shaken the Beast off his chest, "I don't know how to put it, but well . . . it seems to me . . . that you are what we call in America . . . emotional."

"You are a Jesuit," shouted Tiburzio. "You know perfectly well I am not emotional. And lucky for you that I am calm now. You have seen me angry before and you should know. And then, now listen to me; and then why should I be calm at all when I say these things? I have a right, understand? A RIGHT to be angry if I want to."

"I don't deny it, but then what would you propose to do? You cannot hope for an end of what you call the Paper Age. It's too bad, but that's just the way it is. People can't live without papers, like anonymous savages."

"Why?" asked Tiburzio, resting his hands on the table.

"Now you are asking me why. Well? Because . . . it's obvious. How could they?"

"If I wanted to be unfair I could retort that they can't live WITH papers, because this cannot be called a LIFE, but I shall not mention this. I shall limit myself to asking you: Do you imply by this that they need protection?"

"Well, what's wrong with protection? They don't need too much of it, it's true, but . . . they cannot remain anonymous."

"Nonsense. I'll tell you how they can remain anonymous. THEY ARE JUST BORN THAT WAY, surely more so than they are born free and equal in your Declaration of Independence. Names are given,

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and I don't see for what other purpose than that of offering the Beast a handle by which to grab the individual. I am for calling people love and darling sometimes, sons of bitches other times, and the remaining times just by whistling at them. Names should be given to people only after they are dead, and only if for some good reason the memory of them survives."

"This is no plan. This is just a nice crazy idea."

"No plan? I have a plan, a scientific plan, a plan of reconstruction which doesn't even need the four or five ritual years to be carried out. Here it is: In all the countries in the world, in all the towns and villages and hamlets under the sun, there should be a celebration of the Right to Anonymity. All the certificates of identification, birth, vaccination, etc., party membership cards, passports and anything bearing a name and a government stamp should be burned in the public square, IN TRIPLICATE. Yes indeed, IN TRIPLICATE. And if anyone as much as dares to question: Why in triplicate? The answer should be: This question has forever remained unanswered in thousands of government offices throughout the world. Millions of anguished people have asked it millions of times only to hear the angry spokesmen of the Protecting Beast tell them from behind the counter that this was the rule. So be it the rule also on the day of Liberation. IN TRIPLICATE!!!! And whoever doesn't present three authenticated copies of his papers, will not be given back his Anonymity, and will remain forever identified, with his name kept on a lone sheet of paper in the gaping files of huge, empty offices and archives. Him alone they will chase like the last remaining prey to their generous Protection. Him alone."

And upon saying this he kicked the chair aside and left the room.

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London Letter

I SUPPOSE by the time this is printed the Second Front will have opened. It is generally assumed that this will happen within the next few months, that the German part of the war will end this year; and that there will be a general election turning on domestic issues soon afterward. Meanwhile not much is happening politically. It has occurred to me that it might be useful if I gave you some background stuff about two contestants in the British political scene, Parliament and the Monarchy, which I have rather taken for granted in previous letters. But first of all something about current developments, in so far as there are any.

The Government's whole policy, internal and external, continues to move more and more openly to the right, while public feeling continues to swing leftward as strongly, I should say, in a more disillusioned way, as it did in 1940. Fed-upness and disbelief in sunshine promises are general, and show themselves in sudden outbursts of indignation like the row that occurred over Mosley's release from internment. On the face of it this was a bad symptom amounting as it did to a popular protest against habeas corpus (incidentally there was far more clamor against Mosley's release than there had been in favor of locking him up in the beginning), and it is also true that most of the public demonstrations were stage-managed by Communists anxious to live down their own anti-war activities. But there was a great deal of genuine feeling, especially among working people, always on the ground that "they've only let him out because he's a rich man." Since 1940 we have suffered a long series of Thermidors, and people grasp the general drift, but only through events that influence their own lives. There is no authoritative voice on the left to tell them that things like the AMG policy in Italy, or the jailing of the Indian Congress leaders, also matter. By-elections show a big turnover of votes against the Government, and in some cases a big rise in the percentage of the electorate voting. Since I wrote to you last, the Government has only lost one election (out of about half a dozen), but might have lost others if the opposition vote had not been split. There is a new crop of "independent" candidates, whose policy is usually of a kind to split the opposition rather than the Government vote. Some people think that these "independents" are financed by the Conservative Party.

My own fear is that the moment the war is over the Conservatives will conduct a whirlwind campaign, present themselves as "the party that

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won the war," bring forward hundreds of handsome young RAF officers as candidates, promise everything under the sun, and then chuck it all down the drain as soon as they are back in office. However, more experienced observers than I think that they couldn't bring this off, the people have grown too wise to be fooled again, and the Government can only win the general election by keeping on the Coalition. Theoretically, this puts the Labor Party in the strong position of being able to extort a high price for their support, or else to fight the election on their own with a good chance of winning. In practice the existing Labor leaders, who are terrified of power, will certainly keep on the Coalition and demand very little in return, unless very strongly prodded from below: in which case we shall get a Parliament similar to the present one but with a stronger opposition. There have been a few tentative moves toward some kind of Popular Front, but they don't get far in the face of official Labor disapproval and the hostility of the minor left parties towards one another. The only organized opposition is still Common Wealth, which has made a little headway (they have won another by-election), but is suffering from mysterious internal dissensions. Control of it seems to have partly passed out of Acland's hands into those of a rather sinister business man who is helping to finance it and is thought by some to have entered the party with the object of neutralizing it. Since Acland no leading figure has appeared on the Left except for Beveridge, who has won a kind of popular renown and probably has political ambitions. Though a professor rather than a politician, he is just conceivable as a popular leader—a lively, attractive little man, rather like Cripps in his willingness to talk to anybody, but much more genial. Nor has anyone worth bothering about appeared on the other side. The group of Disraelian "Young Tories," apart from having no definite policy, are a wretched crew, with not one really talented person among them.

Pro-Russian sentiment is still strong but is cooling off in my opinion. The Kharkov trials dismayed a lot of people. Even the distinctly doubtful public-opinion polls conducted by the Russophile *News-Chronicle* show that the mass of the people don't want reprisals or a vindictive peace, though they do want Germany disarmed. If they grasped what was happening I can imagine them turning anti-Russian quite rapidly if there were any question of forced labor or mass trials of war criminals; or even as the result of heavy casualties when the Second Front opens. Relations between the American troops and the locals are better, I think, though one could not call them good. There is much jealousy between American white and colored troops. The press shuts down on this subject to such an extent that when a rape or something like that happens, one can only discover by private inquiry whether the American involved is white or colored. Discussion of inter-allied relations is still avoided in the press and utterly taboo on the air. The best example of

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this is the BBC celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Red Army without mentioning Trotsky, but American susceptibilities are studied even more carefully than Russian. We are still not broadcasting in Russian—this at the request of the Russians themselves—though we are broadcasting in nearly 50 other languages.

Well, now a word or two about our ancient institutions.

PARLIAMENT

When I was working with the BBC I sometimes had to go and listen to a debate in the Commons. The last time I had been there was about ten years previously, and I was very much struck by the deterioration that seemed to have taken place. The whole thing now has a mangy, forgotten look. Even the ushers' shirt fronts are grimy. And it is noticeable now that, except from the places they sit in (the opposition always sits on the Speaker's left), you can't tell one party from another. It is just a collection of mediocre-looking men in dingy, dark suits, nearly all speaking in the same accent and all laughing at the same jokes. I may say, however, that they don't look such a set of crooks as the French Deputies used to look. The most striking thing of all is the lack of attendance. It would be very rare indeed for 400 members out of the 640 to turn up. The House of Lords, where they are now sitting, only has seating accommodations for about 250, and the old House of Commons (it was blitzed) cannot have been much larger. I attended the big debate on India after Cripps came back. At the start there were a little over 200 members present, which rapidly shrank to about 45. It seems to be the custom to clear out, presumably to the bar, as soon as any important speech begins, but the House fills up again when there are questions or anything else that promises a bit of fun. There is a marked family atmosphere. Everyone shouts with laughter over jokes and allusions which are unintelligible to anyone not an MP, nicknames are used freely, violent political opponents pal up over drinks. Nearly any member of long standing is corrupted by this kind of thing sooner or later. Maxton, the ILP MP, twenty years ago an inflammatory orator whom the ruling classes hated like poison, is now the pet of the House, and Gallacher, the Communist MP, is going the same road. Each time I have been in the House recently I have found myself thinking the same thought—that the Roman Senate still existed under the later Empire.

I don't need indicate to you the various features of capitalism that make democracy unworkable. But apart from these, and apart from the dwindling prestige of representative institutions, there are special reasons why it is difficult for able men to find their way into Parliament. To begin with, the out-of-date electoral system grossly favors the Conservative Party. The rural areas, where, on the whole, people vote as the landlords tell them to, are so much over-represented, and the industrial

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areas so much under-represented that the Conservatives consistently win a far higher proportion of seats than their share in the total vote entitles them to. Secondly, the electorate seldom have a chance to vote for anyone except the nominees of the party machines. In the Conservative Party safe seats are peddled round to men rich enough to "keep up" the seat (contributions to local charities, etc.), and no doubt to pay an agreed sum into the party funds as well. Labor Party candidates are selected for their political docility, and a proportion of the Labor MP's are always elderly trade-union officials who have been allotted a seat as a kind of pension. Naturally, these men are even more slavishly obedient to the party machine than the Tories. To any MP who shows signs of independent thought the same threat is always applied—"We won't support you at the next election." In practice a candidate cannot win an election against the opposition of his own party machine, unless the inhabitants of that locality have some special reason for admiring him personally. But the party system has destroyed the territorial basis of politics. Few MP's have any connection with their constituency, even to the extent of living there: many have never seen it till they go down to fight their first election. At this moment Parliament is more than usually unrepresentative because, owing to the war, literally millions of people are disenfranchised. There has been no register of voters since 1939, which means that no one under 25, and no one who has changed his place of residence, now has a vote; for practical purposes the men in the forces are disenfranchised as well. On the whole, the people who have lost their votes are those who would vote against the Government. It is fair to add that in the general mechanics of an election in England there is no dirty work—no intimidation, no miscounting of votes or direct bribery, and the ballot is genuinely secret.

The feeling that Parliament has lost its importance is very widespread. The electorate are conscious of having no control over their MP's; the MP's are conscious that it is not they who are directing affairs. All major decisions, whether to go to war, whether to open a second front, and where, which power to go into alliance with, and so forth, are taken by an Inner Cabinet which acts first and announces the fait accompli afterwards. Theoretically, Parliament has the power to overthrow the Government if it wishes, but the party machines can usually prevent this. The average MP, or even a minor member of the Government, has no more information about what is going on than any reader of the *Times*. There is an extra hurdle for any progressive policy in the House of Lords, which has supposedly been shorn of its powers but still has the power of obstruction. In all, only two or three bills thrown out by the Lords have ever been forced through by the Commons. Seeing all this, people of every political color simply lose interest in Parliament, which they refer to as "the talking shop." One cannot judge from wartime, but for years before the war the percentage of the elec-

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torate voting had been going down. Sixty percent was considered a high vote. In the big towns many people do not know the name of their MP or which constituency they live in. A social survey at a recent election showed that many adults now don't know the first facts about British electoral procedure—e.g., don't know that the ballot is secret.

Nevertheless, I myself feel that Parliament has justified its existence during the war, and I even think that its prestige has risen slightly in the last two or three years. While losing most of its original powers it has retained its power of criticism, and it is the only remaining place in which one is free, theoretically as well as practically, to utter literally any opinion. Except for sheer personal abuse (and even that has to be something fairly extreme), any remark made in Parliament is privileged. The Government has, of course, devices for dodging awkward questions, but can't dodge all of them. However, the importance of Parliamentary criticism is not so much its direct effect on the Government as its effect on public opinion. For what is said in Parliament cannot go altogether unreported. The newspapers, even the *Times,* and the BBC probably do tend to play down the speeches of opposition members, but cannot do so very grossly because of the existence of Hansard, which publishes the Parliamentary debates verbatim. The effective circulation of Hansard is small (2 or 3 thousand), but so long as it is available to anyone who wants it, a lot of things that the Government would like to suppress get across to the public. This critical function of Parliament is all the more noticeable because intellectually this must be one of the worst Parliaments we have ever had. Outside the Government, I do not think there can be thirty able men in the House, but that small handful have managed to give every subject from dive bombers to 18B an airing. As a legislative body Parliament has become relatively unimportant, and it has even less control over the executive than over the Government. But it still functions as a kind of uncensored supplement to the radio—which, after all, is something worth preserving.

THE MONARCHY

Nothing is harder than to be sure whether royalist sentiment is still a reality in England. All that is said on either side is colored by wish-thinking. My own opinion is that royalism, i.e., popular royalism, was a strong factor in English life up to the death of George V, who had been there so long that he was accepted as "the" King (as Victoria had been "the" Queen), a sort of father figure and projection of the English domestic virtues. The 1935 Silver Jubilee, at any rate in the south of England, was a pathetic outburst of popular affection, genuinely spontaneous. The authorities were taken by surprise and the celebrations were prolonged for an extra week while the poor old man, patched up after pneumonia and in fact dying, was hauled to and fro through slum streets

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where the people had hung out flags of their own accord and chalked "Long Live the King. Down with the Landlord" across the roadway.

I think, however, that the abdication of Edward VIII must have dealt royalism a blow from which it may not recover. The row over the abdication, which was very violent while it lasted, cut across existing political divisions, as can be seen from the fact that Edward's loudest champions were Churchill, Mosley and H. G. Wells; but broadly speaking, the rich were anti-Edward and the working classes were sympathetic to him. He had promised the unemployed miners that he would do something on their behalf, which was an offense in the eyes of the rich; on the other hand, the miners and other unemployed probably felt that he had let them down by abdicating for the sake of a woman. Some continental observers believed that Edward had been got rid of because of his association with leading Nazis and were rather impressed by this exhibition of Cromwellism. But the net effect of the whole business was probably to weaken the feeling of royal sanctity which had been so carefully built up from 1880 onwards. It brought home to people the personal powerlessness of the King, and it showed that the much-advertised royalist sentiment of the upper classes was humbug. At the least I should say it would need another long reign, and a monarch with some kind of charm, to put the royal family back where it was in George V's day.

The function of the King in promoting stability and acting as a sort of keystone in a non-democratic society is, of course, obvious. But he also has, or can have, the function of acting as an escape-valve for dangerous emotions. A French journalist said to me once that the monarchy was one of the things that have saved Britain from fascism. What he meant was that modern people can't, apparently, get along without drums, flags and loyalty parades, and that it is better that they should tie their leader-worship onto some figure who has no real power. In a dictatorship the power and the glory belong to the same person. In England the real power belongs to unprepossessing men in bowler hats: the creature who rides in a gilded coach behind soldiers in steel breastplates is really a waxwork. It is at any rate possible that while this division of function exists a Hitler or a Stalin cannot come to power. On the whole the European countries which have most successfully avoided fascism have been constitutional monarchies. The conditions seemingly are that the royal family shall be long-established and taken for granted, shall understand its own position and shall not produce strong characters with political ambitions. These have been fulfilled in Britain, the Low Countries and Scandinavia, but not in, say, Spain or Rumania. If you point these facts out to the average left-winger he gets very angry, but only because he has not examined the nature of his own feelings toward Stalin. I do not defend the institution of monarchy in an absolute sense, but I think that in an age like our own it may have an

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innoculating effect, and certainly it does far less harm than the existence of our so-called aristocracy. I have often advocated that a Labor government, i.e., one that meant business, would abolish titles while retaining the royal family. But such a move would only have meaning if royal sentiment exists, and so far as I can judge it is much weakened. I am told that the royal visits to war factories are looked on as time-wasting ballyhoo. Nor did the news that the King had caused a black line to be painted round all the baths in Buckingham Palace do much to popularize the five-inch bath.

Well, no more news. I am afraid I have written rather a lot already. It is a foul winter, not at all cold, but with endless fogs, almost like the famous "London fogs" of my childhood. The blackout seems to get less and not more tolerable as the war goes on. Food is much as usual, but wine has almost vanished and whisky can only be bought by the nip, unless you have influential pals. There are air-raid alarms almost every night, but hardly any bombs. There is much talk about the rocket guns with which the Germans are supposedly going to bombard London. A little while before the talk was of a four-hundred ton bomb which was to be made in the form of an enormous glider and towed across by fleets of German airplanes. Rumors of this kind have followed one another since the beginning of the war, and are always firmly believed in by numbers of people, evidently fulfilling some obscure psychological need.

Yours ever,

GEORGE ORWELL

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Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*

T. S. ELIOT

I WISH to try to make clear the sense or senses in which I propose to use the word *culture* throughout this article. It will be remembered that Matthew Arnold laid down that culture is the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known or said in the world. Without necessarily accepting or rejecting this definition within its own limits, I am not here concerned with the culture which the individual may envisage as an ideal or set himself to acquire, but with the culture that a whole society may develop and transmit. I wish to keep in relation two meanings of the word which tend to become separated, each of which should be present when we intend the other. The first meaning is that which first suggests itself: that of a refinement of living, including appreciation of philosophy and the arts, among the upper levels of society. The second is the more fundamental: it is what we imply when we speak of *primitive culture*. It is the whole complex of behavior, thought and feeling, expressing itself in custom, in art, in political and social organization, in religious structure and religious thought, which we can perceive most clearly as a whole in the less advanced societies, but which is equally present as the peculiar character of the most highly developed people or nation. It is what we mean when we speak of *a* culture, instead of culture without the article. These two meanings, that of the culture of a class and that of the culture of a whole people, have to be kept distinct but always in relation. For it is a part of my thesis that there is no "culture" without "a culture," and no culture of a class or of an individual unless there is a living culture in the people to which that class or individual belongs, however remote the most highly and the least developed individuals of that people may appear superficially to be from each other.

It is obvious that among the more primitive communities the several parts of culture are inextricably interwoven. The Dyak who

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spends a season building, carving and painting his barque of the peculiar design required for the annual ritual of head-hunting, is exercising several cultural activities at once; there is no occasion for him to specify which particular service he is rendering to his community, to himself or to his gods. As civilization advances a considerable degree of occupational specialization may evince itself: in the New Hebrides certain islands are said to specialize in particular arts and crafts, and exchange their wares, or display their accomplishments, to the reciprocal satisfaction of the members of the archipelago. But while the individuals of a tribe may have, like the king or the witch-doctor, separate functions, it is only at a much further stage that a capacity for abstracting from one another religion, science, politics and art appears. And just as the functional activities of individuals tend to become hereditary, and hereditary function tends to harden into class distinction, and class distinction leads to class conflict, so do religion, politics, science and art reach a point at which they dispute amongst themselves and lay claims against each other. This friction is, at some stages, highly creative; how far it is the result, and how far the cause, of increased consciousness need not here be considered. The tension within the society is a tension also within the mind of the superior individual: only a very advanced stage of civilization could produce the *Antigone*—for the clash of laws must have taken place in society before it could be made articulate by the dramatist and meet the response from an audience which the dramatist's art requires. In Greece there appears to have been a development of the philosophical mind with which the religious consciousness failed to keep pace: hence the problems of the Greek dramatists, and the eventual hypertrophy of skepticism. For the less speculative Romans, what happened was rather the failure of the religious pattern to develop with their expanding political organization. In the mediaeval world a European synthesis of religion and philosophy, of faith and free enquiry, of devotion and art, appeared to reach, with a precarious tension between Church and State, its nearest approximation. And it was in the disintegration of *a* culture, that, with the Renaissance, began the efflorescence of what the nineteenth century, already somewhat retrospectively, was to call "culture."

It is commonly observed that any developing society tends to greater functional complexity; that function leads to class; that classes persist after their functions have disappeared and that hereditary function becomes hereditary pretension. An upper class which has come to exist only for itself, deprived, by its own folly or incompetence, or by circumstances beyond its control, of its functional

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relation to the rest of society, may be disposed of in several ways. It may be ignored as in France, extirpated as in Russia or diluted as in England. But the duties which it has failed to fulfill are not all taken over by another class, or by society as a whole, and the mere removal of an inefficient class does not solve the problems of society. A society which has preserved enough vitality to recover from its own revolutions will probably evolve slowly a new upper class, integrated with the rest of the community as its predecessor was not, and with it a new culture. But at this stage we are not concerned with such mutations, but with the possibility of the preservation and growth of such culture as we have. With the decay of an upper class, or more precisely of an upper middle class, its cultural values tend to disappear also; and the question to consider is whether modern society—in any country—has enough vitality to preserve its fundamental culture and to adapt it to modern conditions, and to adapt modern conditions to it.

No healthy society, however little advanced, is without its own culture: some have become, through adverse circumstances or some radical error, definitely retrograde; others have been demoralized through association with more advanced cultures. For if a culture is a whole, the effect upon it of a higher civilization is to disintegrate it, and to impose upon the minds of its members a greater strain than they can bear. To alter the land tenure system, the marriage customs, or the administration of justice in a savage tribe may be to replace the worse by the better, but it is attended by great and often unpredictable perils: tamper with the pattern of primitive culture at one point, and the whole structure may fall to pieces. I mention the influence of a higher culture upon a lower only as a preparation to considering what a higher culture may do to itself. The abuses of a rigidly stratified society, giving rise to a sense of injustice which stirs the forces of revolution, represent only the more political aspect of deterioration, and produce an over-emphasis upon the political element in culture. Other aspects of decline are to be seen in other separations of activities and groups than those immediately related to political and economic conditions. Religion, philosophy and art—each becomes a distinct province, cultivated by a different group of people. The artistic sensibility is impoverished by its separation from the religious sensibility, the religious by its separation from the artistic, and the vestige of *manners* may be left to those who, having their sensibility uninformed either by religion or by art, and their minds unfurnished with the material for witty conversation, have nothing left but an inherited behavior which ceases to have meaning. Culture shrinks to the ambit of a group, a group not necessarily identical

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with any class, but equally cut off from organic relation to the whole of society, and eventually expires. We have to consider whether the modern world is hostile not merely to any particular and antiquated form of culture, but to culture in any form. And that does not mean hostile to the satisfactions of a limited number of persons in any nation, but hostile to the proper development of the nations themselves.

II

If a conflict between modern civilization and true culture exists, this is not a merely political malady, and is therefore beyond a merely political cure. Indeed, both nationalism and internationalism, the one by applying unnatural methods, for extraneous purposes, to the forcing of local culture, and the other by attempting to ignore local differences of soil and climate, can do more harm than good. An artificial centralization is reacted against by an equally artificial regionalism. With the motives for cultural regionalism, including the preservation of existing languages, one cannot but have warm sympathy. For the expression of imaginative reality, for the truths of poetry and of religion, a man is best equipped when he uses the language of his ancestors, shaped by a particular racial sensibility and capable of conveying the messages of the inherited imagination: science and commerce would find one common abstract medium of communication more convenient, and the prestige of the languages of a few dominant peoples has therefore been exaggerated by an age of science and commerce—though without nourishing the imaginative resources of these languages. It is true that in the past the combination of racial strains and of different linguistic elements, and the supersession of various dialects by one standard speech, have made most important contributions to culture: but it is of the present that I am speaking.

The effects of an industrial civilization have combined to deprive the mass of humanity of its native culture: a culture which, with laborious inefficiency or in spasms of alarm, we endeavor to supply by education and enlightenment. The assemblage of masses of men in large centers for mechanical occupations, the mobility of labor (a mobility which labor instinctively resists), the separation of work and play, tend to destroy culture at the root. These are commonplaces of observation from which people proceed to make recommendations: but instead of proposing cures which may be only palliatives, we have first to understand what culture is, what are its relations to the fundamentals of religion and the departments of human activity, and what has happened to it. Only thus can we break down the two alternative,

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but equally obstinate, prejudices: the first, that culture is a matter of museums, of academic research, or a pastime for a small and futile group; the second, (which I may call the mercantile view of culture) that it is something which has heretofore been the possession of a privileged few and which will, in a new order, be shared by all equally.

The shrinkage of the area of culture is accompanied by a shrinkage of the meaning of the word. I have already suggested that, while the disappearance of popular culture has concentrated the meaning of the word to the culture of the "privileged classes," the whole of even that culture has become so split up, that it is doubtful whether many members of the privileged classes are in possession of more than one or another fragment of it. Culture has come to mean hardly more than an appreciation of the arts, and this small area is again divided into that of those who interest themselves in contemporary art and that of those who care only for established art. When *The Times,* in a leading article, some time ago, made an indiscriminate attack upon modern literature, it was clear that the "common man" for whom it professed to speak was the common upper-middle class man—who, having presumably had unreserved opportunity for acquiring that culture which is inaccessible to his inferiors, is apparently the most implacable enemy of the "highbrow." The point I wish to make would be quite lost if it were supposed that I made it for the purpose of defending contemporary literature. While I object to criticism which either praises or denounces authors as a group, instead of on their individual performance, I am quite willing to admit (though without necessarily admitting the moral charges with which *The Times* confused its case) the frailties of modern art and literature. The artist is, at best, making the best he can of a disintegrated state of society; at worst, he is merely the victim of it. He has not the advantage of participating in a larger society in which his own activities, together with others, receive critical appreciation, and he has no such society to write for. So the background is reduced: and if the artist in such a situation is inclined to exaggerate the importance of his art, that is his reaction to a world which is indifferent, scornful, amused or frightened.

The shrinkage of the meaning of the word "culture" to cultivation of art and the restriction of interest in the arts to small and somewhat isolated groups in various capitals, is not unrelated to the disappearance of original culture from the larger areas of the globe, and the very slight development of original culture in areas of colonization. In the field of the arts, it has become noticeable for at least a generation, that success in painting and sculpture means success in

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Paris. The more gifted painters of every nation tended to settle in this centre, where only were to be found the critical standards, and the society and emulation of equals, without which an artist suffers. Paris, being the centre of production, was naturally also the central market for an international clientèle: as the art itself became international, so did the public of the necessary means and taste. In literature, the centers were naturally the capital cities of the most important languages—most important, that is, both because of the numbers of people to whom those languages were native, and the economic and political importance of their nations. For the English-speaking peoples, the centre has always been London, though during the last twenty-five years, New York has acquired a cultural autonomy of its own—an independence not unconnected with the growing financial and economic power of the United States.

Up to a point, this centralization is a healthy development. When the area from which the intellectual elements of the capital are gathered is not too large, and when the capital is not of immoderate size, much is gained, in stimulation of thought and of the arts, as in refinement of manners, from the existence of such a center for superior society. But in culture, as in industry, there should be a balance between town and country. The parallel is not intended to be drawn closely: for in the matter under discussion, what is desirable is an organic relationship of culture between the capital, the country, and also the provincial towns. When there is excessive concentration in the capital, the effect on the provinces is obviously bad; but the effect on the capital, and on its intellectual and appreciative society, is also bad, as that society becomes more and more wholly urban-minded. The tendency in England has been somewhat counteracted by the attachment to the land for which the English are still distinguished, even though that attachment is for most of the more prosperous middle class townsfolk represented only by the vestigial symbol of the week-end cottage: in America, where the upper strata of modern society are mostly of urban origin, the divorce between culture and agriculture is more evident—the farmer has been presented, for several generations, as a comic and unknown character. But the prospect for the future is equally sombre for all of the more advanced peoples. The balance between town and country, between agriculture and industry, may be restored by careful planning; something may be done to check, if not to diminish, the growing size of each metropolis: but it is likely enough that by that time "culture" will have become so discredited, and the groups in power so impervious to all that it comprehends, that it will find no cranny in which to sprout. Such might

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be the outcome even without any sudden transfer of power to any groups than those which now control our economic and political navigation.

So far have we proceeded already in the direction of a cultureless society that the foregoing considerations may seem to most readers in these times to be of only trifling importance. I do not present them therefore simply as what you may have taken them to be, another faint plea for "recognition of the arts"—a plea for subsidizing activities no longer appreciated, useful or desired, or for the preservation of wind-mills: the importance of culture in *this* sense lies in its vital relation to culture in the other sense, and consequently to problems which we must sooner or later face whether we will or no. If I speak of the diffusion of culture in England in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century (indicated by the number of places in which books, and serious books too, were printed and published); of the past importance of such centers as Norwich and Bristol—to say nothing of Edinburgh in the time of George IV—it is not from any sentimental regionalism. These are world and imperial problems today: they concern our relations with the Dominions; with India, where we early endeavored to plant an English system of education to the detriment of the cultivation of the Indian classical languages by Indians, in the West Indies, where several races have taken root without bringing their original culture or forming a new one of their own. The causes of friction in the modern world are not solely political or economic: one of them is a widespread cultural dissatisfaction and unrest. And the cultural problem, as I shall attempt to urge presently, is inseparable from the religious problem.

III

One of the questions which is beginning to be discussed is that of the formation of "élites" in democratic or mass society.* The analysis by Karl Mannheim in *Man and Society* is particularly valuable, as an account of what has happened and is happening. While it does not give us much guidance as to what is to be done, it provides a salutary reminder of the conditions under which a proper élite is formed, and the dangers latent in any state of society in which the selection is on the basis of *achievement* alone. "It is possible," he

* "The problem of a sociology of the intelligentsia is, in spite of the fact that much energy has been devoted to it, still in a preliminary stage."—Mannheim, *Man and Society,* p. 82. I am not very happy with the word "élite," but it seems to me preferable to the word "intelligentsia," which might be preserved to denote intellectual groups in Russia during a particular period of change.

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says, "that in such a society, the succession of the élites would take place much too rapidly and social continuity which is essentially due to the slow and gradual broadening of the influence of the dominant groups would be lacking in it." In his three principles upon which selection has been based—blood, property and achievement—Mannheim seems to me to have in mind only the ordinary "aristocratic" conception of *blood* (social position, founded on the possession of land for a number of generations) and to ignore what are to our purposes the more important aspects, those of transmitted aptitudes and domestic environment. The inheritance of a particular high level of culture is what matters, and it is only incidental that the maintenance of such a family tradition has been largely dependent upon a settled social position and the continuance of a degree of material affluence. The development of a superior culture among people would seem to me to depend upon the maintenance of such an hereditary élite, refreshed by the addition and assimilation of new members—provided that the rush of new recruits is at no time so numerous as to be overwhelming, by the adoption of those individuals of exceptional gifts who possess the sole qualification of *achievement*. Such is a general description of what has happened in the past: if it conflicts with the reader's convictions about what ought to happen in the future, let him reflect that a high degree of culture in an equalitarian society can only be attained if the great majority of men can be raised to a level, and kept at a level, which has never been remotely approached in the past. If élites are to be formed solely on the basis of *achievement,* then it is our business to enquire how to inculcate the right values of what is worth achieving.

It may be desirable at this point to anticipate an objection which is likely sooner or later to occur to the reader's mind. The history of some great cultures of the past—that of Greece, for instance, or of the Middle Ages—may lead us to the conclusion that the development of culture has its cycle; that the perfection of one stage arises from the decay of a previous stage; that it can do no more than last out its time; that efflorescence and decomposition are inexorably related; and that at no time have all the levels of culture which I would maintain been found to co-exist. The charge has frequently been brought, against writers like myself, of wishing to put the clock back, of craving for a romanticized folk-culture, or an incredible mediaevalism. At least, the censure of this essay must be on a somewhat different ground—that of my wishing to have all at once what can only be had in succession in an historical process, a co-existence of the primitive and the most highly sophisticated. I am by no means insensible to this

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criticism, any more than I am insensible to the possibility that the highest achievements of a culture may mark the end of that culture; that history goes on, and that men cannot remain settled in any approximation to perfection that they attain—for all our approximations are too imperfect. My reply must be that to think in terms of historical inevitability can, at most, only be one side of our intellectual activity; that if we are to think towards action we must first enquire what things are valuable, whether it is possible to have them all at once or not; and that it is much more worthy of the human spirit to suffer from paradise lost or paradise unattainable than to content itself with its fallen state in ignorance. And the magnitude of the crisis of the world today may itself prevent our being hypnotized by the admonitions of history: for we are not now in a position in which old peoples and old cultures are likely to be supplanted by new—we are in a common danger to all the races of the world.

I do not propose to explore in all the directions to which a consideration of culture naturally leads. It is obvious that there is a bearing on the theory of Education, which might, I hope, provide a corrective to some of our educational assumptions. Unless we have a right notion of what is valuable, of what we mean by success, and of what types of man we admire, our reforms of education may go little farther than a multiplication of sanitary school-buildings and a further proliferation of diplomas. The assumption that clerical labor is more dignified than manual labor, that manual labor in a factory is more dignified than labor on the land, is always liable to creep in unsuspected; as is also the assumption that "culture" is something to be brought down to everyone, instead of something to which a few can be raised. But the only affirmation about education, perhaps, that comes within the scope of this paper, is this: that it is only in a very restricted sense that education produces culture—it is more widely true to say that the culture produces the education: just as the political system of a people must issue from its culture.* Which is not

* It is possible that we are about to lay more burdens upon "Education" than it will bear. In an article in *The Sociological Review* for July-October, 1940, Mr. A. M. Carr-Saunders writes:

"I have said that the responsibility of the universities is heavy. Upon them rests the training of the élite. It is coming to be recognized that any civilization which is vital and progressive, depends upon smaller groups whose influence directs changes in the cultural pattern and determines whether they are for the better or the worse. These groups were once united by blood; later they were bound together by the possession of property; in the society of the future they will emerge by selection. In the selection and training of those who will compose these groups, the universities must play a large part. I have used the plural advisedly. It is not a question of producing *an* élite. The health of civilization

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to belittle either educational theory or political theory, but to put them in their organic place.

IV

The question of the relation of culture to religion must now be raised. The question has to be put in two forms: as from the sociologist's point of view, that of the disinterested observer, and from the point of view of the Christian, the relation of culture to the faith in which he believes. Even from the former point of view, it is probably a false simplification to take the culture of a people as the fundamental fact, and regard its religion as a special development of that culture. For the religion is the body of beliefs which gives that culture significance, and has also a profound effect upon the form which the culture takes. The influence of culture upon religion, and of religion upon culture, can be observed wherever the same religion has been adopted by peoples of widely different languages, racial stem, and habitat: on the one hand the varieties of cultural background tend to lead to diversity of cult, and on the other hand a uniformity of belief tends to assimilate these peoples to each other. In the more primitive and self-contained peoples, where the culture and the religion are coterminous, the distinction between religion and culture can hardly be said to exist. The religious sanction may extend to many activities which in more highly developed societies are quite distinct: in the social-religious pattern of primitive society it is impossible to separate religion from political structure, the administration of justice, the arts, warfare, domestic customs, agricultural regulations, or anything else. Such a condition makes for cohesion (as in the early Jewish world) and for survival of a group surrounded by alien and hostile groups; it may also tend to arrest development. But a characteristic of early society is not necessarily one that it is desirable to outgrow altogether; and the ideal society, so far as we can imagine it, would have much the same unity on a much higher plane. The distinction between the religious and the other aspects of a culture, and the consequent removal of religious sanctions and tabus from a large area of activity, permits scope for enterprise and innovation, certainly for improvement, but it has its disadvantages also. It is not only that the spirit of enquiry, scepticism and innovation enters into the religious cult also—that is a late stage, and indeed a necessary one—but that the

requires, not so much a class of guardians in whom wisdom reposes, as intellectually and aesthetically adventurous groups."

It would seem that Mr. Carr-Saunders has read *Man and Society*, but without regarding the admonition of Dr. Mannheim which I have quoted above.

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dissolution of the primitive pattern, with the advance of liberty of thought and behavior, imposes a strain upon human beings greater than the majority can bear. Hence the tendency—dissimulated as a reaction from overt disorder—towards the unification of thought and behavior, in an artificial pattern, of totalitarian society. We must remember also that the progress of humanity can be conceived in terms of the breaking down of limited cultural patterns and the subsequent formation of larger and more complex ones, while its deterioration can be seen in terms of regression towards smaller and more simplified patterns. At certain stages of transition, the elements in the struggle may be disguised, so that what to the protagonists in an historical situation seemed a religious conflict, may appear to posterity to have been really a struggle of social and economic interest—and vice versa.

These considerations have a bearing on a question which has presented itself, and no doubt will continue to present itself, to the human mind at various times and in various places: the scruple of the devout. Should the human soul aspiring towards salvation, intended by its Creator for the bliss of the beatific vision, concern itself with such an ephemeral pastime as the cultivation of art and letters? The extreme puritanism which leads to the rejection of "images" may aim at any other worldly goal, or it may be fortified by humanitarian zeal or by the doubt of the right to pleasures which lack of opportunity or native insensibility denies to the majority of fellow-beings. The doubt may lurk in the consciences of many who do not openly confess it; it may be employed to condemn pleasures which a man is incapable of enjoying, and which he therefore conceives to be merely "pleasures of the senses." I do not dispute that the repudiation of these interests may present itself as necessary in a life of peculiar ascetic vocation, as may the repudiation of many other activities lawful and desirable for most individuals: but to repudiate them, not only for oneself, but for the rest of humanity, is a religious perversion which in the long run can only damage the cause it aims to serve. Religious fanaticism may lead to the rejection of temporal government and order, sometimes to the denial of common morality. To deny the arts in the name of religion is to deny the flesh, and partakes of the nature of heresy. Or we may describe it as the assumption that religion can flourish in a soil one of the essential constituents of which has been removed.

But if the arts are an essential element in culture, and if culture is necessary for the development of the highest spiritual capacities of a people, it must not be forgotten that without a religion there

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can be no culture. Neither the arts, nor political life, nor economic life, nor anything that can be included under the term civility, can flourish without a total culture, and there is no total culture without a religion—not a multiplication of private figments, but a common faith and order. I would assert further that a religion cannot be fully apprehended until it becomes the faith of peoples of different original cultures, and while uniting these peoples in a common brotherhood, can be contemplated in its transcendence of culture, as well as lived in the conditions of each particular culture. Any mere political, legalistic or economic union of humanity is a frail and temporary substitute for the union in diversity of cultures, which only a common religious faith can create.

Culture eludes definition: a conception of it valid for the whole world would omit all the factors which make it possible in any particular time and place; and a conception of it for any one people or social group would attempt to arrest and fix what is, if vital, moving and fluid. Because of this difference, also, it is not something for which we can directly plan: it is not an area such that we can make specific recommendations for "culture in a Christian order." Not that there is nothing whatever to be done about it. What I have tried to convey is something which I think should be at the back of our minds, or rather, which should affect all our value-feelings, in each of the departments of intellectual design. For instance, culture is certainly *not* Education, and to think that we can deliberately produce culture by educating a class, or a selected group, or the whole people for culture, is to expect the cart before the horse. But theories of education which ignored culture would be as mistaken as those which aimed to produce it. Theories of politics which ignore it ignore the particular peoples for whose benefit the theories should be designed. As culture refuses to be captured by the museums, or the universities, or the Workers' Educational Association, or the British Council, so on the other hand a recognition of it can make all the difference to our action in every other direction.

I think, also, that there is something more than a fanciful analogy to be drawn between my view of culture and the view, held by some contributors and vigorously put forward from time to time in the pages of *The New English Weekly* on the subject of agriculture. I am concerned here with our relation to the spiritual soil, just as that view is concerned with our relation to the material soil; and I venture to think that these two views are, in the end, concerned with the same reality. The greatest achievements of the imagination, religious and artistic, have the firmest roots. And if we can keep our minds clear,

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on the subject of culture, between the essential and the accidental, the permanent and the transitory, the true and the false—an effort requiring fresh judgments and decisions in constantly changing situations—we shall be both the most wisely conservative and the most radically revolutionary, because we shall be working for those changes which really matter, instead of those which are merely spectacular.

[*In the Summer issue of* PARTISAN REVIEW *several writers will participate in a discussion of Mr. Eliot's argument in this essay.*]

THE AMBITIOUS RABBIT

We in bed are left clinging to shadows of warmth beneath us,
But the mind, our most apparent faculty, the rabbit,
Leaps as the hunter approaches, the daylight, the pattern of boxes—
Quivering, leaps from the clover patches or the mire
Where darkness had overtaken, and hopping into vantage
Rues the bed he slept, was caught, suspended in,
To dream of life with quickness weighted and no vantage.

The hunter's horn! horrors of whiteness foretelling his order,
Spaced, advancing behind him; bags and barrels, pointed
Objects, bristling crowns, ropes and traps to set—
And over all the morning sun, uncompromising:
Here is the equipage of tempest and wicker baskets
(For lunches), and here is the rabbit in their sight.

He knows the tactics, he is intelligent, having observed his bed
He widens his eyes and folding his senses to his head
Charges onto the hunter's train; the rabbit leaps
Between the legs, out of a box and into a barrel,
He memorizes mechanisms of the traps,
And steals the hunter's lunches packed in colored papers.

The rabbit's strategy reverses persecution:
Sobbing now, confused, out-done, the hunters, huddling,
Dust their breeches and prepare the following day's advance.
The sleeper rises to follow the rabbit,
His shadow is stiffened and cold,
"The longer the window is open the longer—
The longer the egg—the clock—"

JUNE CANNAN

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Father and Son

MELVIN TUMIN

We had just passed Moll's drug store and were almost out of the Italian neighborhood, but I still clutched tight to my father's hand. I wasn't taking any chances. I remembered the fright of my last encounter with the Gentiles. I must have squeezed the hand I was holding especially fearfully as a group of four or five ragged, dark eyed, loud laughing boys passed us. I say I must have given a special squeeze because I can still see the puzzled look my father cast at me at that point. I think if I had looked up at him then he would have known why. But I did not dare look. I could never let him be sure. I knew that a man doesn't like his sons to be cowards.

But what I felt isn't really important, except as it made my father feel for or with me. And my father was a man of great feeling. We were all sure of that. Not only were we sure, but every member of his congregation, no matter if they liked him or thought him oppressive, would always be more than ready to say "Our *rebbah,* he's a man of great feeling." Even my aunts on my mother's side—eight of them whom we saw at best infrequently, partly because of the distance to our house from their sections of the city, and partly, (perhaps even more than partly as I see it now) because he didn't have any respect for them and they respected him too much to like him—even they, I say, when we happened to be alone for a minute or so, would say: "Moisha, you look just like your father. But your father is a man of great feeling. Do you think you'll grow up to be like him?" I wish he were here now to see how hard I try to do what I think he would like me to do, to be like him.

But as we walked along the street, on the sunny side, always on the sunny side, on our way toward the synagogue, I thought how unlike my father I was. He was big, six feet tall, maybe a little taller than that. I was short and fat, and it seemed as if I would always be fat. My father was heavy, but, oh, so well built.

Even then I thought that maybe I was afraid and he never seemed to be afraid because he was tall and strong, and I was short and fat. But that didn't seem like a good answer. Because my mother was short and fat, too. And I knew she wasn't afraid. She would walk

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through the dark hallways at night without turning on a light. I suffered a thousand frights before I got the courage to pull my head out from under the covers, run to the doorway, slip my hand out into the hall and click on the light switch. And, even at that, the creaking of the floor boards under my own weight made me shiver and almost cry if I thought that no one was up to help me in case there was trouble. But I never knew what kind of trouble it would be.

I didn't know then, either, from what kind of trouble I was protecting myself by holding on to my father's hand. I just knew that there would be some trouble if I had to meet that gang of boys by myself, trouble that would be sure to scare me. And when I got scared there was nothing that would reassure me except to run away. But that didn't really help. There would be two frights then. The situation didn't vanish just because I made my feet fly from it. It stayed with me. And the more it stayed with me the more I became frightened of myself.

It was terrible to be frightened in the broad warm sunlight. It was more terrible for my father to know it. He must have noticed an involuntary shudder, because he said to me: "What's the matter, Moishala? Why are you shivering? You're not cold, are you? It's so nice and sunny out today. Ah, it's a *machaiah*. What more does a man need today? If he's got his eyes open and his nerves ready, there's a whole world of treasures to be found in such simple things as walking along a street on a nice sunny afternoon." Already he was beginning to forget the source which had prompted him to speak and was beginning to ramble on, mostly to himself, I'm sure. "See, Moishala, see how the sun makes even that gray garage look like it's living. Come, let's stand in the sun for a few minutes and take in as much as we can. Come," he added, as I momentarily hesitated, "come over here."

He led me by the hand to the front of the garage that faced the street and the sun. It was the spot on the block where the sun seemed to be most concentrated; where you would have gone, as we used to, to set fire to a piece of newspaper by catching and focusing the rays of the sun onto it through a ten cent magnifying glass.

"Look," father said, "do as I do." He took his hat off, stood straight so that his back touched the garage, threw out his chest, lifted his head, closed his eyes, and seemed to melt right into the rays of light and heat. "Breathe deeply," he said, "breathe deeply and regularly. If you breathe right, you get the sun into your nose," he added with a laugh, "and then you'll have hair grow in your nose."

At this I could not help but laugh, and the laugh that it got out

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of me relieved instantly the embarrassment I felt at what I thought to be the spectacle my father was making of himself by standing like that in the middle of the block. He couldn't see, as I did, that people were laughing, as they passed, at the idea of a man taking a sun bath in the middle of a city block. But I could, and it made me squeamish and uneasy, and made me want to take my father and drag him away. But I dared not. Not so much because he would have been angry had I protested, as he might well have been. But because I had a queer feeling that even if he had been aware that people were laughing at him, he wouldn't have cared.

I positively could not understand this attitude of indifference. It made me think that maybe my father wasn't a man of such strong feeling. Or, what seemed even more frightening, he was a man of great feeling, but of great strength too. The kind of strength that lets you not care what other people think or say about what you do and look like. Oh, to be so strong that you didn't care. Or at least not to worry whether people were laughing at you or talking about you when they passed you on the street. If only I could be sure that people didn't pay any attention to me. But I was never sure of that. And here was my father. Not only did he not care whether people paid attention to him, but even if they had, he wouldn't have cared what they were thinking.

For a minute I was jolly. I relaxed. I was happy. I let go of my father's hand, imitated his stance as best I could, breathed deeply. I even had a thought that came only terribly infrequently in those days, a thought that runs through my mind now like the one Yiddish folk song I still remember, a thought that makes me swell and fill with pride. In short, I thought for a moment that I was really my father's son.

I felt the sun beating on my already darkened skin, felt it seeping through my thin clothes, felt it warming the lobe of my ear, felt it nestle among the hairs on my head. But best of all, I felt it wrap my father and me in the same blanket of light. Wrap us in the same blanket, fill out our backs with the same warm bed, bring us together more than the mere holding of hands ever could. Bring us together and make me feel as if I were inside of him, just as I felt when I would crawl into bed while he was napping of a Saturday afternoon, wriggle close to him, so that the rhythm of his expanding and subsiding stomach would be even with mine, and the two of us, breathing together, in the same rhythm, breathed the world around us, made the world but one world, made us one. Then I was not afraid.

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God, Geometry and the Good Society

SIDNEY HOOK

ONE OF THE noteworthy features of the American scene today is the revival of classicism and religion in education. It ties neatly into the reactionary pattern whose outlines are clearly visible in almost all fields of contemporary culture from politics to art. The underlying causes of this revival are to be found in the frustrations of democratic life and scientific method created by an economy which is gradually losing its liberal capitalist character without acquiring a socialist one. The fevers and convulsions of our times have brought a yearning for some large unifying faith; it has been forgotten that, except for the last quarter century, the golden age of faith was the most bloodthirsty in European history. At any rate, the failure of the democratic revolution to bring a healing draught to a society in crisis has given the counter-revolution its opportunity. And with incantations about the eternal, timeless and traditional, the counter-revolution is at work.

In recent months an educational faction, whose slogan seems to be "For God, geometry and hierarchical order," has launched a powerful offensive, not only against current American practices—many of which are deplorable—but against progressive education which until now has been the chief critic of these practices. The success of this movement is problematical. It depends largely upon whether big business, after it takes over the New Deal or throws it into discard, will unite with the Church and other pressure groups to foster education for an anti-secular faith. This faith may be called education for "freedom" or "duty" or something just as edifying.

Looking aside from the causes of this movement, I wish to examine briefly some of the grounds that are currently being offered by the educational counter-reformation for its program. Like all movements of this character it has a left wing, not always conscious of the uses to which it is put, that appeals to men of good will and does not draw explicit organizational conclusions of a social and political kind. By neglecting the specific historical context of all educational proposals, these left-wing spokesmen may even come to believe that organizational matters are irrelevant. By deceiving themselves, they

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deceive others and are at once both more plausible and more dangerous than their centrist and right-wing brethren. That is why I shall discuss Mark Van Doren's *Liberal Education* rather than the recent works of Monsignor Sheen, M. Maritain and Mr. Hutchins.

The central argument of Van Doren starts from the premise that the nature of man is always and everywhere the same. Therefore, the education of all men should be the same. Therefore, the curriculum of study must be identical, it must be prescribed and each student should have all of it. Therefore, the content of study must be primarily traditional and classical, oriented to the past not the present. Since the best of this tradition is enshrined in books, only the great books—"the unkillable classics" in Van Doren's phrase—should be studied. Such a study *is* liberal education. It is exemplified in the St. John's College program and *only* in that program. "Until it is accepted everywhere in America, we shall lack the right to say that liberal education exists among us." Education, truly understood, is "liberal" education. Democracy is impossible without true education: therefore, democracy is impossible until such "liberal" education is universally adopted.

This is drawing the loose ends of the book together into a coherent and continuous argument. Yet every statement is explicitly made and the "therefores" are all Van Doren's own. It would take a volume to expose all the hoary metaphysical fallacies that underlie the premises of his argument. But even granting his metaphysics, his conclusion that education must be uniform is a non-sequitur. And even granting that in a certain sense education should be the same for all men, it does not follow that a classical rather than a modern education must be prescribed (after all the Greeks did not have a hundred great books). Nor does it follow that education must be identified with Van Doren's idea of liberal education or that the latter is a necessary condition—practically a guarantee—of democracy.

It is indeed curious that one who is so enthusiastic about the medieval trivium and quadrivium should be so slovenly even in the matter of the formal correctness of his inferences, not to speak of their truth. After all, Van Doren is dealing with a theme in which poetic license has obvious limits.

To speak of *the* nature of man is already a sign that a selective interest is present. What is designated by the term 'man' may have many natures depending upon the context and purpose of inquiry. Even if *the* nature of man is defined in terms of what differentiates him from other animals, we can choose any one of a number of diverse traits that will satisfy the formal conditions of the definition. And for many purposes what man has in common with other animals

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may not be irrelevant to his nature. Once we assign a term to a referent and seek to discover the nature of the latter, we find that the nature of a thing is always construed from its activity or behavior. But the activity or behavior of man depends upon many things within, and outside of, his body. It is therefore the sheerest dogmatism to deny that the nature of man can change. Speaking of permanence and change in things, Van Doren writes: "The most familiar form of the problem has to do with the nature of man, concerning which the educated person will know what he knows about any nature, namely that insofar as it is a nature, it does not change. For then we should have another nature; meaning that in the case of man he would have another name."

Apparently Van Doren's educated man cannot distinguish between things and names. Names are intelligently used to facilitate control of things. The names we choose to attach to things have no bearing on how they behave. Van Doren's argument is tantamount to saying that kittens can never become cats or water ice or steam because they have different names when they do. The whole of modern science would come to a stop if it took this naive word-magic seriously. Van Doren, who is fond of quoting Pascal, would do well to ponder Pascal's remark: "They say that habit is second nature. Who knows but that nature is first habit?" Since the changes that men undergo are part of their nature, it is absurd to argue from a definition of the *term* 'human nature' that human nature cannot become different. For if it is true by definition it is an analytic statement or tautology that does not tell us anything about the world (except about how a word is to be used). But Van Doren sets great store by this statement as a momentous truth about men.

Even more startling is what Van Doren does with this conception of unchanging human nature. Instead of establishing the ends of education by an evaluation of the consequences of different educational proposals, he states these ends in terms of what is appropriate to the unchanging nature of man. Liberal education "studies an art or system of arts . . . to secure that human beings should be precisely or permanently human." But we have just been told that what makes a man precisely or permanently human is that he is *called* a man. If he has to *become* human, then he might not become human. But this is what Van Doren regards as impossible. On Van Doren's conception of man's unchanging nature, there is no reason why he should be given an education at all. Because he has not clearly distinguished things from names, his argument at all key points begins with a tautology and ends with an absurdity. The attempt to derive the necessity of

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education, and especially a particular kind of education, from Van Doren's muddy metaphysics is hopeless. It is certainly not helped by admonishing educators to ponder "programs of being no less deeply than schedules of doing," or to realize that "the prime occupation of liberal education is with skills of being." But whatever a program or schedule of "being" may be, it apparently demands an *identical* curriculum, centered around *tradition,* in which languages, mathematics and science are the chief subjects. Let us see how this is justified.

It is interesting to observe that so long as educators restrict themselves to the statement of the formal objectives of a liberal education, they seem to be in agreement. For example, the following objectives of a liberal education have been culled from a few random pages in Dewey: the development of the capacity to think, hospitality to ideas, establishing habits of trained discrimination, cultivation of the power of imagination, a realizing sense of basic values, freedom from class, sectarian, or partisan prejudice. Now John Dewey is the *bête noir* of Van Doren and his confrères, but they assuredly would agree with him that these should be among the objectives of liberal education. They would insist that these objectives are derivable from *the* metaphysical nature of man: Dewey, that they could be reasonably justified in terms of their fruits. But what interests us here is not the difference in justification of these objectives but the difference in what is inferred from these objectives. Progressive educators maintain that although *formally* these ends are valid for all, the methods and ways of achieving them are difficult *empirical* questions because of the existence of a variety of individuals in a variety of different environments. The validity of techniques and curricula is an experimental matter. For Van Doren and his school all these problems are evaded: *the* nature of the curriculum is deduced from *the* nature of liberal education just as this was deduced from *the* nature of man.

This elementary confusion between the formal identity of the ends of education with the material differences in the educational means of achieving them, is the clue to Van Doren's thinking when he considers concrete questions. There is not a single argument he uses for a universal curriculum for everybody which cannot serve just as well, *mutatis mutandis,* to recommend, say, a universal milk diet. "If liberal education is, it is the same for everybody; the training it requires, in addition to being formal, should be homogeneous through four years—if the best is known, there is no student whom it will not fit, and each should have all of it." Suppose we agreed that everyone should enjoy health. The criterion or definition of health, (in Van Doren's language, *the* nature of health), is the same for

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everybody, namely, the optimum levels of physical and mental activity and the absence of any pathological conditions. But what would we call a physician who insisted that since a healthy man is a healthy man, therefore everybody who wants to become healthy should have the same diet and all of it?

Again, suppose we believed, as most progressive educators do (but for reasons different from those of Van Doren) that there should be some common features in the study of men who are called upon to solve certain problems in a common world. And further, that language, mathematics and science should be among these studies. Could we therefore deduce, as does Van Doren, that only *one* kind of curriculum is best calculated to give this instruction to everybody? Not only his conclusions but his whole procedure here is preposterous. Despite his apostrophes to mathematics and science, I fear that Mr. Van Doren does not really understand what they are about. After rapturous passages about the beauties of mathematics, he defines it as the science of "quantity." And a lurid light is thrown on his conception of scientific method when he argues that all children should be made to memorize passages of poetry and prose because at decisive moments their thought will be the better for it. "A medical diagnostician of our day attributes many of his insights to the lines of poetry his father once made him learn; their influence is indirect, but all the more potent for that reason." Compelling evidence, indeed! Van Doren is most shocking, however, on a subject one would expect him as a literary man to treat with most circumspection, namely language. Most modern educators believe that students should learn one other language besides their own without specifying what it should be. But Van Doren has to deduce what this language must be, and for everyone, too. Thus: "Greek is still the best one for the purpose, and indeed for any purpose." That something—Greek, of all things—is good for any purpose is not only a very un-Greek notion, it is a very foolish one.

The question of whether a liberal arts curriculum should be focussed on the vital problems of our time or on what great thinkers have believed about the vital problems of *their* time is a genuine one. And the curriculum of St. Johns College, which is based almost entirely on the problems of the past, not only deserves, but positively demands serious consideration. But Van Doren does not argue his case on the first question, and in discussing the second he uses the language of adoration rather than of analysis.*

* I have discussed the first question in *The Nation* of March 11, 1944, with specific reference to the neo-Thomist view shared by Van Doren; the second, an evaluation of the St. John's curriculum, will be presented in the *New Leader*.

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Emotionally Mr. Van Doren is sincerely committed to democracy. It is natural that he should seek to relate his beliefs on education to his views on democracy. But the way he does it is inexcusably crude. He lays the failure of democracy at the door of modern illiberal education, and then equates *the* nature of democracy with *the* nature of liberal education as he conceives it. To do the first he is compelled to support the canard that American youth is without faith, cynical about truth and the values of democracy. For this he blames their teachers. "The education of youth had slipped by default into the hands of those who were bound to discredit education itself, and democracy with it." "The last generation of students may never forgive its teachers who taught contempt and fear of truth." This charge against American youth—now quite in the patriotic mode—arose because American campuses have not been fired by a propaganda which paints the war against Hitlerism as a war *for* democracy. But is it a war *for* democracy, or even for the Atlantic Charter? American youth has performed its duties cheerfully enough, and there are other—and valid—justifications for fighting Hitlerism besides transparently false ones. If it is the truth about the war that Van Doren is seeking, some of these ostensibly misguided students can teach him something his own methods cannot.

The sweeping accusations Van Doren hurls against his colleagues is evidence that enthusiasm for liberal education is no specific against illiberal and arrogant intellectual manners. For example, we are told that modern educators have taught contempt for truth. They have done so because they have insisted on the distinction between fact and opinions, instead of between opinion and truth. Taken literally, of course, this is absurd. For whatever a fact is, it cannot be established without affirming propositions that are true. But what hides behind the absurdity is the view that the best way to discover the facts is not by relying upon scientific method but by resorting, in the manner this book so well illustrates, to metaphysics.

Van Doren would save American students from the effects of scientific thinking—the truth is that all too few are given to such thinking—by dosing them with his patented brand of liberal education. And this liberal education he identifies in another series of outrageous non-sequiturs with education as such, and with democracy, too. "Democracy as education is man teaching. It serves itself by making its pupils free—not free for or from the state but absolutely free. This is another way of saying that it serves itself by making men. But education, too, has the job of making men. So education is democracy, and democracy is education." Not even the violent straining for

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aphoristic effect extenuates this loose language and bad thinking. All genuine problems, such as the degree of freedom a democratic community can extend to its schools, the most effective methods by which schools can impart a critical understanding of the unfinished tasks of democracy, how teachers can accept a social philosophy from among different alternatives without indoctrinating their charges—all disappear in a string of portentous tautologies composed by arbitrary redefinition of terms.

It would be unfair to Van Doren, however, to suggest that all of his writing is of this character. Some of his asides have real point, but, unfortunately, the author is himself impaled on them: "The sign that the liberal arts are present in a discussion is its quality, in whatever degree, of light and precision." And in places he fixes important truths with epigrams that will delight both the philosopher and the poet. "Our sincerity depends on our knowledge of what we are talking about. Morals cannot be better than thought."

Unfortunately, for all his talk about Reason, Van Doren offers no rational defense of his educational program. But from this program there radiate certain lines along which he himself has taken a few tentative steps. Others, more capable philosophically and less unaware politically, have already indicated where these lines lead. His denunciation of modern educators as contemners of truth, leads to the demand, forcefully made by Mortimer Adler, that American education be purged of all naturalists and positivists "as more dangerous to democracy than Hitler." His belief that metaphysics gives better warranted knowledge than science is implemented in the demand of Hutchins and M. Maritain that metaphysics and theology be recognized as the supreme study in our higher institutions of learning. And although Rev. Gannon, Monsignor Sheean and Bishop Noll do not expect as yet to have the only *true* metaphysics and theology taught as they would like to teach it, they are in the van of the crusade to bring religion into the schools and end the separation of Church and State in American life.*

It would be a gross overestimate of the role of the schools in the community to believe that they can initiate or arrest social and political change. But if the forces of secular democracy lose the battle on the educational front an important center of resistance to totalitarian trends in political life will be gone.

* Cf. Noll's *Our National Enemy Number One—Education Without Religion* (Huntington, Indiana, 1942).

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Theatre Chronicle

Winter in the Theatre

IN THE New York theatre, this is a big sad year. Every night is New Year's Eve on Times Square. It is hard to walk along Broadway, hard to get tickets, hard to get dinner. To find oneself installed in a seat before a curtain is in itself a triumph; what the curtain discloses, when raised, is not so important; the means have supplanted the end. Much of our pleasure this year comes from the sense of our own achievement; in the foyer, during the intermission, we are as likely to compare our strategies as ticket-buyers as to compare our experiences of the play. Our experiences have in fact been thin; the theatre has rationed itself, drawing heavily on its own staples, on Shakespeare and Bizet, German expressionism, barbershop harmony, the Whiffenpoof song, the character of Dorothy Parker, which belongs as firmly to the theatre as a caricature in Sardi's. There are on the stage this year only two things which do not remind you of something else—Mary Martin and the character played by Margaret Sullavan in *The Voice of the Turtle.* Everything else is derivative, frankly so in *Othello,* where it is a question of a revival, a restoration of a classic; mockingly so in *Carmen Jones,* where an opera of passion becomes a "hot" show and a dark theme, given to dark actors, becomes by paradox light; perversely, sentimentally, uneasily so in *One Touch of Venus,* where the tradition of the ballad, the tradition of barbershop harmony, the tradition of German expressionism, are both parodied and asserted; corruptly so in *Winged Victory,* where the play is a bad imitation of a bad movie, and where the playwright can, at his big moment, find no more suitable musical outlet for his democratic emotions than the song of the Yale Whiffenpoofs.

This is not a war phenomenon. Since the collapse of the proletarian theatre as an art-form eight years ago, the theatre has been plagiarizing itself. Revivals have come thick and fast; there have been the straight revivals of Shakespeare, Shaw, Chekhov and Ibsen; and the revivals-with-a-difference, *Julius Caesar* in uniforms, *Romeo and Juliet* as ballet, the Negro *Macbeth*—it is significant that our white culture has had to draw so heavily on the Negro (witness the *Macbeth,* Jack Carter as Mephistopheles in Orson Welles's *Dr. Faustus,* and now Paul Robeson and the cast of *Carmen Jones*) for the revivification of its classics; as in the days of the Empire in Rome, it is the son of the freedman who believes most in the national past, and the élite must depend on the feelings and energies of its ex-slaves to experience its own artistic inheritance.

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The revival itself is not new. What did seem to come in with the war is another kind of borrowing, more abject, and more desperate than the appropriation, which is perfectly legitimate, of a treasure from the collective storehouse. Actors, after all, must work, and producers must produce; no doubt it is better all around for their talents to be employed on the good and old, rather than on the bad and new. The habit, however, has spread; the playwrights have taken it up; they do not imitate the masters; they lift quotations, particularly from the poets, to do what ought to be their own work.

Last year Mr. Thornton Wilder used quotations from Spinoza, Plato, Aristotle and the Bible (spoken, incidentally, again by Negro actors) to finish a play for which he himself had no outcome; the device was perhaps forgivable since the subject of the play was the history of culture, and since the words were beautifully spoken and dramatically introduced. And in *The Eve of St. Mark* Mr. Maxwell Anderson, having already taken his title from Keats, presented one of his characters with the whole of Eliot's *Sweeney Among the Nightingales,* which was recited *twice* and served once to bring down a curtain which might otherwise have stayed up forever; the lines were badly read and their appropriateness to the situation on the stage was never indicated (it is true that young men sometimes recite poems but, in the particular case, why Eliot, why *Sweeney?*—one was left with the hypothesis that Eliot was the most *poetic* poet and *Sweeney* the most *poetic* poem that Mr. Anderson could think of). This year quotation from the poets has become a mania on the stage: Milton and Shakespeare and the Bible make their appearance in *The Voice of the Turtle,* and in *Winged Victory* a poem from an unknown source carries a crucial scene, symbolizing, rather inadequately, for the audience the values for which the Air Forces are fighting; while in *Over Twenty-one,* by Ruth Gordon, it is the corpus of Dorothy Parker's work, as it exists, not in quotation, but in the memory of the audience, that provides the *donnée* of the play, and what the spectators laugh at is not so much the rather heavy quips of Miss Gordon as the light and legendary quips they themselves have heard ascribed to the wit of Miss Parker.

All this is merely symptomatic. In theory there is nothing against the use of quotation in drama; it might well serve as it formerly did in the essay as decoration or embellishment; it cannot, however, support the dramatic structure, provide curtains, assert values, define character—a quotation from Milton or Shakespeare does not in itself guarantee the *bona fides* of the juvenile; the man with a verse on his lips is quite as likely as not to be a scoundrel, a professional seducer, an intellectual climber. Quotation has been used by Eliot and Pound to do some of the poetic work; but in these cases, particularly in Eliot's, the use of the quotation is itself part of the subject of the poem, and there is deliberate pathos and irony in the fact that the artist has had to resort to quotation:

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these fragments have I shored against my ruins. Moreover, as in collage, the arrangement of the excerpted material constitutes an aesthetic problem and consciousness is everything; quotation becomes a kind of wry understatement, as when an actor who has already shown his powers proves them by throwing a line away—an actor incapable of speaking the line in the first place gains nothing by tossing it aside.

In the authors who are bandying verses on the current stage there appears to be no consciousness of a predicament; it is the audience, rather, which discovers the dramatist's impasse. Only in *One Touch of Venus* does the element of consciousness protrude; here three sophisticated artists, Ogden Nash, S. J. Perelman and Kurt Weill, acknowledge the fact that you cannot write a modern love song or a modern ballad or a modern ballet, you cannot, that is, write it straight; what you can do is to take over an old form and parody it, and at the same time make love to it surreptitiously, keeping always a poker face. These old forms, the ballad, the barbershop sweet music, the rigid mechano-set movements of the expressionist ballet, are all treated so; and in one case, "The Ballad of Dr. Crippen," which makes the first act finale, something which is at once grotesque, absurd, and morally terrifying is created. The authors have here produced both a parody of *Hamlet* (there is the idea of a play within a play, a murder drama enacted on a marionette-scale stage to catch the guilty conscience of the hero) and a parody of the Victorian moral ballad; there are also, in the staging, reminiscences of waxworks, the *Eden Musée* and the Chamber of Horrors at Coney Island. The refrain goes something like this:

"This is Dr. Crippen, Harley Harvey Crippen
Lying in a felon's grave;
He gave his life and that of wife
For the love of Ethel Le Neve."

Several impressions are combined: the idea that man is a marionette pulled by the strings of passion, the idea that man is a wax figure, i.e., that there is no life in him, the idea that love and murder are absurd activities, unworthy of a modern intellectual, the idea that love and murder are frightening and that the fate of the outlaw (the felon's grave) is the ultimate horror—the ideas are superimposed one on the other, but as in a cubist painting all are visible simultaneously; they interpenetrate each other, and the total effect is one of envy, of Dr. Crippen, of Dr. Crippen's judge, which was the whole of society, and envy of an imaginary ballad-writer who might at one time have written the song in all seriousness. This number is beautifully produced, and sung with marvelous shading by John Boles, who belongs in style and spirit to the gas-light tradition but here by mockery transcends it. "The Trouble With Women," sung by a male quartet in a barbershop, strikes off another effect of the same kind, but lighter, less complex. It is also

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worth noticing that in this musical there is a harmony of subject-matter and style that our regular stage-writers cannot give us, that is, the idea of the play, at least at the beginning, is that Venus, if she were to come alive today, could not rouse the blood or even the attention of the normal young man who is her true love; only the dissolute art connoisseur has a cold, lubricious eye for her—she was better off as a statue. This theme is rather lost sight of as the show progresses, but its relevance to the authors' collective problem is apparent. The play in general loses sight of its objectives. Perelman's humor is too frigid, too literary for the stage, and Ogden Nash is unable to write a lyric or Kurt Weill a tune which is as fresh, as unself-conscious, as *sui generis* as Mary Martin, the star. Nevertheless, at its best, in its moments of self-laceration and parody, *A Touch of Venus* is the most interesting production of the season.

Ruth Gordon's play, *Over Twenty-one,* deals with a character like Dorothy Parker who is married to a character like Ralph Ingersoll and endures for his sake the trials of army life in Miami Beach to help him get his commission. It is dull, rough stuff done in what appears to be the atelier of George Kaufman; there is not the slightest respect paid to character, on which comedy after all is founded: you create a church-social kind of old lady and then, when you need a laugh, have her say, "Damn" or "Hell"—anything goes. The most hilarious moments of the evening are when Miss Gordon is locked outdoors in her panties, and when the trays stick in the icebox while the colonel is paying a call. Mr. Kaufman himself directed and contributed his usual touches: two large irascible men stand facing each other, stage center, and yell insults back and forth; this is supposed to be funny, and it is true that the audience laughed. Miss Gordon is an accomplished but very mannered actress who, in classic roles (*The Doll's House, The Country Wife*), gets wonderful contrapuntal effects by the impact of her style on the author's style; with only her own material to work with, she seems monotonous, though the sureness of her technique is a delight.

Winged Victory is the show about the Air Force, written by Moss Hart, and played by actual members of the service. The boys who have not been too long in or too much affected by Hollywood are convincing in their very lack of skill, and there are two or three good performances which do not arise from technical inadequacy. The play, however, is shocking in its false sweetness, its false democracy (sure there's room for everybody in the Air Force and one man is as good as another, but the Jewish boy from Brooklyn is only good for a laugh while the real hero, the impeccable young pilot, is the son of a West Point man). Some one has said of this play that it is the Rover Boys' version of the war; this is accurate, and one cannot help imagining with embarrassment, all through the performance, what the people of England, let

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alone Poland or Greece, would make of the problems which agitate Mr. Hart and his characters.

As for Othello, Margaret Webster, using Paul Robeson, has directed it, with a new emphasis on the black-and-white theme. Mr. Robeson, unfortunately, is not an actor. His voice is beautiful, and in the early scenes, where Othello need only be magnificent, he is not over-taxed by the character. When Othello, however, cracks open, Mr. Robeson can no longer follow him, but remains at a distance from the role; even in murder he is courteous and dignified, the well trained concert performer. The direction is bad, clumsy especially in the handling of groups. It is Jose Ferrer's Iago that is the star-piece of this production. He manages, in his soliloquies, to demonstrate the trance-like, solitary, almost visionary character of Iago's dream of evil, which like God's dream of the world, he makes incarnate on earth. The division of Iago's nature between the man as good fellow and the man as destroyer is well established by Mr. Ferrer; this distinction is usually lost by actors who play Iago as Mephistopheles.

The Voice of the Turtle, while not a serious or particularly well written play, makes an original contribution to the stage. John Van Druten has discovered for the theatre a new American type, a type with whom we are all familiar in life but have not seen behind the footlights. This is the character played by Margaret Sullavan; she is the well-brought-up American girl who, at twenty-one, has had two affairs, yet remains at heart a virgin, an innocent, a perennial spinster who will always be more in love with her apartment, her flowers, her possessions, her treasury of quotations from poetry, than with any man she sleeps with, whose bed the morning after a sexual adventure will always be made up, with the spread indented under the pillows, while coffee for two drips in the Silex and toast pops out of the electric toaster. This is the eternal college girl, who will be windswept and hatless at forty, and whose old age no one so far can predict. Mr. Van Druten has been both honest and observant in recording the details of this girl's behavior; he does not shrink from showing the audience the realistic underpinnings of her romantic affair with the soldier who happens to arrive at her apartment; he sees that it is all a matter of propinquity, of *faute de mieux,* an evening on one's hands, a girl who has stood one up and a married man who has got tired of one's intensity. Mr. Van Druten goes so far but no further; he presents the type and weaves a light, rather cute, comedy around her; he does not venture on into analysis or satire, with the result that the play has no third act and remains a play for women, a play at which women can smile tenderly and a little fatuously, relaxing happily in self-love as the heroine relaxes in her bath. Men are out of place at this play, just as a real soldier would find himself violently out of place in that apartment.

MARY MCCARTHY

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Art Chronicle

PIET MONDRIAN was a simple man. He had only one urgent interest in life, his art. He dedicated his life to it completely, selflessly and gladly. He was seventy-one when he died on February 1st of this year in New York; yet his death was a loss to the youngest generation of painters rather than to his own. In his recently adopted country it was the youth who recognized him. At his funeral it was the younger painters who were in the majority. This was as he would have wished it. When he was alive he enjoyed the gayety of their company and their vitality. His own quiet energy was indefatigable. Three days before he was taken to the hospital he had begun a drastic revision of his latest painting which was practically ready for exhibition and to which he had already given more than nine months constant work. His energy was matched only by the demands of his critical conscience. He died, feeling of his last completed work: "I am only satisfied insofar as I feel *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* is a definite progress, but even about this picture I am not quite satisfied. There is still too much of the old in it."

There is a timelessness about Mondrian's work. We will probably come one day to associate it with the period in which it was painted. Critics will probably see in it the expression of that particular period. But Mondrian's fundamental aim in art was to transcend the particular and achieve the universal. He was the great uncompromising classicist of the early twentieth century. Romantic art deals with the particular; for Mondrian the particular was a trammel, a fetter. He felt that naturalistic forms in painting were limited forms by the very definition of their specific references. "The particularities of form and natural color evoke subjective states of feeling which obscure pure reality." For Mondrian reality was that essential living quality we find in nature, not its surface appearances. The appearances of natural things were constantly changing, but this living quality, this inner reality of nature was constant—universal. In his opinion a truly universal art would provide through its own medium an equivalent for this inner reality or living quality, rather than merely a reflection of surface features. In other words, he wanted a cleaner universal basis of expression than naturalistic representation in painting could give him—a purer base for the universal expression of the classicist than any painter before him had achieved. This was what he meant by his frequently repeated insistence that we must "destroy the particular form." This is why in his art he pursued

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the tangent of the arc described by the cubist movement instead of returning with it to a relative naturalism after its first severe, disciplinary phase had served its end.

In Mondrian's eyes the cubists did not accept the logical consequences of their discoveries. In his opinion cubism had stumbled onto the right path: it had set about breaking up the limited forms of naturalistic painting. But out of these it was content merely to create other particular forms with particular associations. To realize a universal form it was necessary to go deeper—to reduce natural forms to constant elements of form, and natural color to primary colors.

When Mondrian arrived in Paris first, in 1910, the French cubist movement was in full flower. He was immediately attracted to the work of Picasso and Léger. Mondrian at the time was thirty-eight years of age. He had already been painting twenty years. His father was a schoolteacher and amateur painter. His uncle was a painter and his first master. He had studied under August Allebé, the Dutch realist. He had spent three years at the Amsterdam Academy and earned a diploma as a teacher of drawing. For a year he had lived by drawing microscopic enlargements, until the strain on his eyes became too severe. The Mesdag Collection in Amsterdam had introduced him to Daubigny and the Barbizon School. The Impressionists, Van Gogh and the *fauves* had in turn taken his interest. By the time he had arrived in Paris he had already begun to break broadly away from the conventional representation of nature. "The first thing to change in my painting," he had said, "was the color. I forsook natural color for pure color. I had come to feel that the colors of nature cannot be reproduced on canvas. Instinctively I felt that painting had to find a new way to express the beauty of nature."

Cubism was not the solution, but cubism clarified the problem for Mondrian. It also suggested a means by which he might effect an interplay of contrasting pictorial elements and express through the tension of their relationships an equivalent for the living quality or inner reality of nature. From his cubist experience he had come to realize that in painting this living quality can only be conveyed through a tension or equilibrium of the forces which contrasted forms and colors exert on one another; also that pure means provided the most effective way to achieve this tension. He saw that the only dependable source of energy for such an interplay of forces in a picture lay in a persistent, equilibrated contrast between an invariable element and a group of variables. He found that for him the only constant relationship was the right angle. Variety he saw most universally expressed through contrasting simple forms and primary colors, never naturalistically limited. And on these bare premises all the work of Mondrian's last twenty-five years was based.

At times he moved too far in one direction for his own satisfaction. The "plus and minus" compositions of his first post-cubist stage were "too restless." The large white canvases of the late twenties and early

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thirties composed of a single rectangle of black lines, with one, two or three meticulously placed rectangles of primary color were "too static"—"too monumental" as he said. The palette of his cubist phase, in his later opinion, was too "vague." His 1918 checker-board compositions where only black and white were used, "were too far from reality." In his later pictures he felt the solid black lines were too oppressive, and in his first New York picture we see them eliminated in favor of colored lines.

Finally in his *Broadway Boogie-Woogie* 1943, and in his unfinished *Victory Boogie-Woogie,* we find him drawing all the strands of his research together. Here we have restlessness and variety in minor forms that we had in his plus-and-minus phase contrasted with a constant dominant rectangularity throughout the composition. The primary colors of his mature years are intermingled with softer secondary squares reminiscent of the golds, grays and pale greens of his cubist period. And he has broken the aggressiveness of his lines, abandoning not only the black, but even the unbroken, colored lines of his first New York work, by giving them a brilliant multicolored, mosaic character. The whole canvas now dances with various sized rectangles in various colors. The eye is led from one group of color-notes to another at varying speeds; at the same time, contrasted with this endless change in the minor motifs, we have a constant repetition of the right-angle theme like a persistent bass chord sounding through a sprinkle of running arpeggios and grace notes in the treble.

This was what Mondrian achieved: the creation of a mode of pictorial expression that provided a true visual universality untrammeled by the limitations of particular form. In the direct line of Seurat and the great classicists, he produced an art which leaned neither on naturalistic representation or decoration, but drew its vitality strictly from the resolution of forces set in motion by relationships within itself. This is what he lived for—born of a family of painters, but, as he expressed it himself, "the only one who was willing to give up everything to paint."

In contrast with Mondrian's insistent demands to "destroy the particular," we have the story of an old man running down the platform of the Gare du Nord in Paris in 1908 shouting to a younger one in a departing railway carriage, *n'oubliez pas la Nature, Weber!* "Don't forget nature, Weber!"

The old man was Rousseau, le Douanier. The young man was Max Weber returning to New York after spending four years in Paris as a friend of Rousseau and a student of Matisse. And Weber, who was holding a large retrospective exhibition in New York at the time of Mondrian's death, never forgot Rousseau's words and has never failed to follow them.

Weber has always interested himself in nature and especially in the particularities of nature. And if the "subjective use of particular details

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and moods of nature"* indicates a romantic, Weber is as thoroughly one as Mondrian was a classicist. And this is notably true of his latest work. Here we find an apparently innate sense of exaggeration, now given a free hand, to the point of caricature. Caricature, however, is a misleading term. This aspect of Weber's work is more truly an inborn "expressionism," which is nothing more than a broad interpretative emphasis on particular details and moods of nature.

In a canvas such as *The Manuscript* of 1944 these tendencies are perhaps allowed a greater freedom than in Weber's earlier work. In this picture, there is certainly a greater confidence of intuitive rightness in what at first glance seems a careless writing of the forms and a haphazard brushing on of color; and out of this approach grows an expression of sardonic if homely fantasy supported by a sulphurous palette. But this moodiness goes back in Weber's work even to his Paris days to such a substantial plastic composition as *The Geranium* of 1911 and gave his cubist and futurist work a personal color quite distinct from that of any Paris contemporary.

Of American painters Weber was probably the most responsive to what was going on in France between the early years of cubism and the advent of the surrealists. He is probably the American who has most sensitively assimilated the suggestions and theories of European painters of that period. Few more successful Futurist compositions could be found than Weber's *New York* painted as early as 1912. And in his *Two Musicians* of 1919 he produced a synthetic cubist work which can stand honorably in the period of Picasso's *Three Musicians.*

Still in all these early paintings, just as in Weber's latest, we find this strange, moody quality. His cubism, in spite of the thoroughness with which he takes advantage of avenues it has opened up for a reinvigoration of pictorial form, has sometimes a note of buffoonery in it—sometimes one of melancholy. We never find in it that even, objective stolidity which is a characteristic of the work of Picasso, Braque, Gris and Léger in the great years of cubism. Even a note of melancholy colors his futurist visions of New York—so different from dizzy mobility suggested by Severini's *Bal Tabarin,* or the linear swing of Balla's *Flight of the Swifts;* it is as if a strain of Oriental music had crept in between his brush and the canvas.

In spite of the distance between the actual work of Weber and Chagall, there is a curious affinity—especially between the fluid, thin washed compositions of Weber today and Chagall's work. But while Weber has a sardonic half-laugh for himself and the world which he knows he paints so well; Chagall sees the world melodic, with a half-smile. Yet it is easy to see how both have made use of the subjective and particular approach and have made with it pictures of first quality.

JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY

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* John Piper: *British Romantic Artists* (London 1942).

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Notes on Fascism and Bohemia

HAROLD ROSENBERG

"You don't have a taste, sir, for the Sublime—or the Ridiculous?"
"Perhaps," Rowe said, "I prefer human nature plain."
GRAHAM GREENE—*The Ministry of Fear*

Modern Man—An Object of Suspicion

That Modern Man could turn Nazi—this is the Sphinx that challenges every moralist and psychologist of our day.

It is not that Nazism suddenly made one aware of the human capacity for crime. After all, this generation had been nourished from infancy on daily dispatches of murder, rape, individual and mass lynching, atrocities. New territories of Man's viciousness—sadism, real and symbolic—were as familiar to us as ghosts and witches to our ancestors.

Not increased familiarity with viciousness but a revelation of the viciousness of the familiar was the Nazi contribution towards making Man once more an object of suspicion. That a nation, a whole society—milkmen, mothers, schoolboys, policemen—should have given itself up easily to a community policy of blows and torture, seemed proof that the monster is lurking in the average and everyday. In this respect the triumph of the Nazis in Germany paralleled, on a more obvious and threatening plane, the disclosures of Dr. Freud.

Thus, at first glance, a certain reassurance seems offered in the explanation of Konrad Heiden's *Der Fuehrer** that the Nazi uprising was the revolution of a special group, "the armed bohemians." We think of "bohemians" as social outsiders, inhabiting small isolated pockets, and generally consider them to be eccentric and far from typical people. Commonly, the word designates artists and late sleepers, who live in odd neighborhoods of big cities. Heiden uses the term in a broader meaning: with him, as with Karl Marx, "bohemian" means the offscourings of all classes—gangsters or international

* Houghton Mifflin. $3.00.

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café adventurers, as well as poets and left-wingers. Even in this broader application, however, the "bohemian" is still, to use an ugly journalistic word, a "misfit."

It would indeed be a good thing, then, if these bohemians, this gang of outlaws, pseudo-aristocrats, cracker-box philosophers, free lovers, unemployed and poets, whom everyone has long suspected anyway, were convicted of the crime of fascism and humanity itself were absolved.

But just to pin things on this human flea market will not do, apparently. For Heiden's definition is deep as well as broad. The bohemian, he says, is an "intellectual" who has not found his place in society. And an "intellectual"? He is the "type of the pragmatical and mechanistically minded modern man, product of mass education [and who isn't], whose sole criterion is: Will it work?"

According to this, the "intellectual" is practically everybody who has gone to school—the exceptions would be certain rare individuals who were educated privately and who shun the test of utility, or measure it in turn by some system of higher values.

Heiden's intellectual *is* Modern Man, and he is a bohemian or potential bohemian, while only the exceptions are not bohemians—for Man does not have a private tutor. So the bohemian won't do as a scapegoat after all, and humanity itself is once more under suspicion.

Heiden's image of the bohemian villain who springs out of cultural conditions bears certain resemblances to that of the sociological Freudian, Erich Fromm, whose alienated and divided modern personality inevitably contains the dangerous "outsider" within the depths of his self. But Fromm does not make Heiden's mistake of dividing society into more than one basic psychological type. . . .

A: It is Modern Man, then, that has tendencies towards fascism?

B: Well, only under certain conditions—unemployment, social upheavals. The monster is there, of course, but—we keep to the Freudian parallel—he comes out only in black weather.

A: But the positive source of evil is still the nature of Man himself, who, if his order breaks down even momentarily, reaches for the ax?

C: Through all psychological theories of Man, the fascist, runs the thread of Original Sin and the belief that society is charged with the function of restraining the evil nature of Man. Once we grant this, the whole democratic movement, the entire spirit of the French and the American revolutions, the educational crusade begun by Rousseau, the socialist and anarchist ideals of a

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stateless society—all these are admitted to have been idle and fairly vulgar illusions. For they depend on the belief that man is inherently capable of leaving behind murder and slavery.

A: But Fromm in *Escape From Freedom* places the blame for the fascist drives on modern social institutions. Once these are corrected the drives will disappear.

C: It's true that to Fromm Modern Man is twisted by the pressures of modern social relations and that he will rise into a higher life once a truly creative democratic society is achieved. Yet even Fromm seems to me to go too far in linking fascism with the contemporary soul. For it has not been demonstrated that the fascist State was created by Man's desires, however neurotic. On the contrary, everything points to the fact that it was the result of a conspiracy and that the so-called mass-following of the Nazis did not represent the common man in Germany. The outstanding moral fact in the history of fascism is that Hitler, despite unemployment, despite the paralysis of all political opposition, despite the Storm Troopers and the connivance of Reichswehr officials, despite the big money, was unable to win a majority or enough dynamic support to capture the State by force as genuine revolutions do. That Hitler could take power only through a coalition arranged behind the scenes by the ruling groups of Germany proves that it was "society" that corrupted the people, not the people who ran amuck against social values.

A: You must admit, though, that Fromm contributes a great deal towards our understanding of why some people joined the Nazis and the others lacked the strength and the will to resist fascism more effectively.

C: Even if Fromm does throw light on what made fascism able to win converts and seize the State, his theory does not explain what caused fascism. A concrete political movement does not arise from the general moral condition of Man at any given moment—democracy, for instance, did not come into being because man suddenly became good or eager for freedom. The positive causes of fascism are to be discovered by analyzing objective political, economic and social relations, as well as our cultural past—rather than by defining an image of some type of individual through psychological or metaphysical speculation.

Class Sociology or Bohemian Monster

Heiden borrows from Marx one-half an idea—or rather, the shadow of an idea. The idea is Marx's conception of the economic

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class structure of modern society, and the shadow is his notion that each class exudes certain elements that separate themselves from the class—*e.g.* bankrupts from the middle class, *lumpenproletariat* from the workers. Heiden rejects the idea but preserves the shadow—he is not interested in economic classes but tries to explain fascism on the basis of economic classlessness!

But if the presence in society of businessmen and workers does not determine historical events, how can history be determined by the presence of *bankrupt* businessmen and *unemployed* workers? According to this view, only those who drop out of a class are effective politically.

Sociologically, as by definition, classlessness is simply a negation of class. The bohemian fights against all classes—as politician, in order to achieve power; as poet, to reach the infinite.

But power and the infinite are empty, and the bohemian's act derives its substance from what it opposes (*e.g.* the realistic imagery of "hallucinated" poetry). The core of Hitler's politics was propaganda against class. Classes stood in his way, except the class he couldn't see at first because it was too far above him, the hereditary aristocracy. "There was one place in Germany in which there was no class division. That was the front-line company. There no one ever heard of a bourgeois and a proletarian platoon; there was just the company and that was the end of it."

It is entirely accurate to say that the Nazi party was formed out of bohemian personnel. For instance, Leudecke, one of the early familiars of Hitler, told without a trace of self-consciousness that he became a Nazi only after it was no longer possible to get money from rich American women. But just because the Nazi movement was an uprising of the classless, its history is inseparable from the inner history of Germany's classes, their political consciousness, their economic collapse and moral apathy.

Tremendous fluctuations occurred in the Nazi movement up to the final consolidation of State power. The party of the classless was constantly being drained and refilled through rhythms in the depths of each class in Germany. The very existence of the Nazi party was dependent on these organic processes taking place outside itself. The peculiarity of fascism as a parasitic growth lies precisely in this inability to develop from within but only through absorbing the secretions and evacuations of the whole social organism. No doubt this has something to do with Hitler's sense of identity with the German folk.

But this dependent character of Nazism places definite limits on the meaning of Hitler's own acts and ideas—many of which are eccen-

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tric and quite lacking in political significance. A good starting point for the biographer interested in the political form of Hitlerism and the essential contribution of the Fuehrer would be Marx's comments on Louis Bonaparte: "The Society of December 10 [Bonaparte's bohemian army] belonged to him, it was *his* work, his very own idea. Whatever else he gets hold of is put into his hands by the force of circumstance; whatever else he does the circumstances do for him or he is content to copy from the deeds of others."

The facts in Heiden's book show that Hitler's sole consistent strategy was to keep his gang intact and to remain at the head of it, until power was "put into his hands." That this gift actually descended upon him is his Miracle which he never fails to call upon in his State speeches.

Heiden fails to uncover the class sources of the life streams of the Nazi party. Conceiving classlessness as thing in itself, as a category describing a certain modern psychological attitude, Heiden traces the adventures of Hitler only against the background of surface political events, such as the French policy in the Ruhr or the maneuverings of Hindenburg. Thus he tells us in sum that the Nazis were a strange rabble; that their policy was improvised out of a wide range of clichés and the absurd, noxious and romantic notions of several nineteenth-century provocateurs, xenophobes, and theoretical world conquerors; that this policy was changed at will—and that through a series of accidents, brutalities and conspiracies this Hitlerite Noah's Ark finally emptied its contents into the offices of the German State.

The blocks of generalizations concerning the nature and history of bohemianism which Heiden intersperses throughout his narrative do not indicate why classlessness was victorious in Germany.

The Genius of Der Fuehrer

Some of Heiden's conclusions about the personality of Hitler seem inescapable, in view of the literary style of *Mein Kampf*. To understand Hitler we must probably start with the contradiction put forward by Heiden that Hitler is a gray, colorless, empty character—"the void, it might be said, disguised as a man"—who, at the same time secretes in certain areas of his ego an immense strength. Most likely we ought to shave off a bit from the stature which Hitler has taken on in Heiden's mind, and analyze more sharply the cultural meaning of Hitler's constant babbling about "the artist" and his habit of pronouncing the last word on every subject, from how women react in the theatre to the need for superhighways. There are executives in all countries today who decide on such matters, after listening to the

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conflicting opinions of experts, without knowing more about them than Hitler. It may be that one of the things that gave Hitler his "nerve" was an early discovery that, with strong enough backing or forceful assertion, almost any opinion can, apparently, be put over, especially in matters of taste and theory. A mediocre artist? Kill the highbrow critics, then who will know? Perhaps it is not the "intellectuals" who are responsible for Hitler, even indirectly, but the unintellectuality, the enmity toward intellect, promoted by modern "men of affairs." . . . After all France, which had a larger proportion of intellectual bohemians than Germany, never yielded to the fascist bait—and I see no reason for denying some credit for this restraint to the Left Bank sophistication as well as to the rational tradition of French culture. "Damn the intellectuals!" is a slogan not inconsistent with fascism.

It would also be possible to go deeper than Heiden into the relation of Hitler's personal experiences to his political stresses if one were not burdened by Heiden's pseudo-aristocratic (another synonym for bohemian?) prejudice that Hitler is "a pure fragment of the modern mass soul." Both the emptiness and the strength of Hitler are more characteristic of the visionary neurotic than of the average man, who is a class man, moulded and limited by social participation, and has never had his ego wiped out and released by ecstasy. Heiden passes too lightly over Hitler's testimony concerning his "ecstatic feeling" in the trenches, "in the night when the roaring of twenty-one-centimeter cannons suddenly began to speak and illumine the horizon with lightnings." It is worth pursuing the hypothesis that this frontline experience, which contains all the psychological conditions of conversion, fixed in Hitler's consciousness the image that changed him, once for all, into the furious Maker of Soldiers—which, in the last analysis, is both the chief content of his politics and his supreme service to the rulers of Germany.

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Poems

A Dominique De Ménil

VOUS NE SAUREZ JAMAIS

Vous ne saurez jamais ma soif mon angoisse
Des visage douloureux, des nébuleuses obscures,
Des sourires lumineux, des carrefours tordus,
Du temps qui naît, du temps qui meurt,
Des fenêtres closes, des tombes étales
Sous le baiser humide du ciel

Vous ne saurez jamais mon désir mon délire
Du cri de l'homme, de l'herbe en prière,
Des rayons de miel, de la mort qui pue,
Des ruelles verticales, des quais huileux,
Du sang sur la bouche, des femmes ouvertes
A la danse sauvage de l'amour

Vous ne suarez jamais ma pieté ma passion
Des mains calleuses, des fleuves somnolents,
Du bleu de la nuit, des siècles perdus,
Des pas dans le sable, des barricades hâtives,
Des silences terribles, de la colère qui lève
Dans la patience tragique du monde

DES COUDES SUR LA TABLE

Tu vois ici, il y avait ici, il y aura
une âme dans les pierres, une fille dans la bouche,
une Dame au bord de l'eau, un coeur au bord du ciel,
un peuple comme ça, aux carrefours éclatants,
comme ça qui allait qui avait
envie de vivre.

Tu vois ici, je voudrais ici, crier prier
lumière de mes fenêtres, sourire de mes rues,
quais dans la brume, bonjour Antoinette,
soleil du matin, ruisseaux d'étoiles,
Seine sous les ponts aux bras si large
qu'un jour la lune y pleura.

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Tu vois ici, écoute ici, parle la sève
des terres vaincues, des hommes dans la marche,
des ventres crevés, du sang indomptable,
des morts qui reviennent, de l'épi de blé,
des routes en croix où des femmes écartelées
appellent au secours.

Tu vois ici, les traces ici, enfant j'ai joué
crépite la grêle, jeu des pendus,
galope salope jeu des massacres,
gémisse la potence jeu de l'amour,
grand-mère s'en va grand-père s'en va
d'outre en outre cassés.

Tu vois ici, mes coudes ici, ils sont pesants
de lourde mitraille, de coups sur la gueule,
de planètes vivantes, de havres tranquilles,
de trépas innombrables, de bonté atroce,
d'eau frémissante, pourquoi pourquoi
la nuit est nuit.

Pour que vienne le jour.

JEAN MALAQUAIS

FOR ALL MY FRIENDS

The moon has thinned; endurance wears it down;
And I must wait until it swells again
And my heart flare, full as that light
Which generates no thing, and burn
When I have brought my friends around,
All caution mocked and futures owned.

So long a living in the savage skull
Accustoms me to no companionable thing
But beasts whose holy certitude walked forth
Like Daniel from his den: my shame, my shame.
Yet when I meet these comrades of my choice
All doubt that sued the Vatican

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And emptiness inhabiting ambition
Will blush; for there's a marrow in the heart
That only lives by interchange of speech.
As what belief has being in the tomb?
Take mirror away and objectivity
The hermit is a monster in God's mind.

The shrunken moon now mimics in my room.
I dramatize my patience till the time
When common speech may purify
That moon against the wrinkled pane
And image of the waiting tomb defy
As lions did love Daniel in his doom.

SMALL LEGEND

Pursuing and pursued,
Perhaps there is no end
Save like the tropic birds
Who go around and around
In an angry, ample cage.

What if solution have but this
Vast oceanic roar at the dark end
And all decision be like bright
And beautiful action without sound,
The simulacrum of bewildered action
And nostalgia for the simple land
When animals around the nursery walls were kind.

Pursuing and pursued
By river and through wood
The field, spongy with dark,
Soaks up the troubled step.

Perhaps the music of salvation
Was never more than that
Disorganized and fractious screech
Of cranes and toucans and coarse parrots,
The tawdry music just that shriek
When animals around the nursery walls departed.

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SONG

Such is season's grave enigma said:
O sad, sad, my poor king who's dead
And handwriting that still exists like him
And words he left that tread his mighty tread.

The boulevard of trees his face curtained
And girdle of oak leaves about his head
Guard his pale loins that cover nothing now.
O hang his face on the autumnal bough.

But what of ice in rivers broken?
That musical speech of gorges against stones?
This was the ice that broke upon his look
O regent of the day he left.

My poor dead king against the avenues!
What lucid snow now sleeps upon his breast!
As once, in other snows respecting none
He was the snow that falls now onto me.

JEAN GARRIGUE

FAR FROM LANCASTER

Past facades bland as a well-dressed
corpse, the traveler goes. His
childhood grew fabulous among
these houses that once were homes

Before he understood his hate for acrid
box in gardens dank with violets.
Along the leafy street, the Georgian
myth bequeaths its elegance to

Decorators' and morticians' flats; and
the twin asperity of steeples,—
like old women among men—whitewashed
and trim, declare the primacy

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That passed. Persistent as memory,
wisteria waterfalls still cascade
from New Orleans wrought balconies
toward kitchen yards' lush scenes

Of secrecy. Here, lilac evenings,
nostalgic as the South, prolonged
the sense of magic in the child,
and fear that this was not for him,

Or was for him only in the trance the
owners missed. The green luxuriance—
like a discreet cough—warned of
invaded privacy on terraces like

Peacock tails, flowering with eyes.
And to the child, the outrage of
beauty without kindness was like a
dream remembered only in the shock

Of accident. The nearby churchyard's
monuments confirm the general, the
educator, and the crank on haggard
slabs like shaggy tweeds, expensive

In their age. Among these tombs, the
child was taught to learn and reject,
the rote of yesterday, like great poems
of the past that don't quite satisfy.

BYRON VAZAKAS

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The Streets and Houses of the City

JANET TERRACE

MARGARET SYDNEY boarded the streetcar with her nickel ready. Her beautifully white gloved hand hovered for the hesitation of a second over the box before her fingers opened and the nickel fell to the bottom with a dull sound, for which she listened. Hearing it, she felt immensely satisfied, and in some way vindicated in thinking of all the thousands of nickels that had gone into that box since she and Josh had left this city of her birth, childhood and adolescence. As she absently found herself a seat she reflected that from the moment of their arrival it had been exactly this sort of thing that had charmed them most—there was an exquisite sense of satisfaction in listening for sounds that had been going on incessantly in the twenty years of their absence, in looking at houses, at streets and people that had been there all the while. She wondered why they had stayed away so long from San Francisco, because they must have cherished it always if their return had so oddly stirred them—she more deeply, she supposed, for having been born in it, than he, who had lived in it only during the extraordinary, chaotic and haloed period of their courtship and early marriage.

She tried now, closing her eyes, to settle her impressions of San Francisco revisited into tangible quantities, into recognition, or delight, or simply nostalgia. But the impressions continued to evade exact definition—it was hard to tell if her feeling of completion, almost of satiety, were from pleasure or pain. The one thing she could clearly make of it was that the city meant far more to her than she had ever imagined. Seeing it again, she had found in the streets, the houses, in what seemed to her the almost sacred blue calmness of the bay, everything she recognized as beauty.

She opened her eyes and looked about, aroused as the car stopped and took on passengers. Unbelievably one of them was Sally Mason.

Margaret recoiled, shocked, at first from the queer surprise of seeing Sally a real figure after years of seeing her only in imagination, but after that more sharply from the instant division in her attitude, which caused her at once to wish to shout to Sally and to hide her

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face, to escape unseen. For in a flash she realized that no matter what she had told herself she had never got over Sally, that the fact of their intimacy as girls had never been reconciled in her mind with the fact of their really strange and venomous parting. Nor had her affection for Sally ever been reconciled with her dismay at a perversity that had always, even during the height of their confidences in each other, kept Sally a hair's breadth the wrong side of honesty and had, after their parting, caused her resentment of it to flare up into fury. She had felt taken in—since she herself was perhaps too completely honest she felt her good faith abused by Sally's disingenuousness. If disingenuousness had been all she would have hidden her face gladly, but it was no more all of Sally than hatred had been all of their old friendship. And suddenly in the midst of all this she found in herself also excitement and an uneasy anticipation.

Now Sally had turned and was coming down the aisle, looking (crisply blonde and blue-eyed still), walking, closing her bag with a snap, lifting her chin exactly as she did as a girl, and quick, impatient, straining, even in a walk down the aisle of a streetcar, to get away somewhere, with the same restless dissatisfaction Margaret remembered so well. "Sally, Sally!" Margaret called, her tone low but pointed nevertheless with intensity and an amazed laugh, and she put out her hand to Sally's arm.

Sally looked down, startled, as the hand reached out to her arm and touched it. Then she recognized the upturned, brilliant face, radiantly excited. "Margaret!" she cried, vexation making her jerk her arm away. But after vexation came a burst of joy as she thought—why not be friends again? Both showed in her face, and Margaret, having just experienced them herself, laughed, and Sally laughed too. "What in the world are you doing here? . . . " Sally asked, bending down.

Margaret said almost ecstatically, "Visiting . . . " and looked into her face as if she would never look away again.

Margaret's candid admission to being moved affected Sally deeply, but at the same time she fretted at the clumsiness of their situation as she stood by Margaret's side, feeling ridiculous because there were still a few empty seats. But as she saw that Margaret was equally unwilling to be an object of interest in the streetcar, Sally preferred for an instant to accentuate the awkwardness by shrugging satirically, seizing Margaret's hand and squeezing it, bending exaggeratedly forward to allow a gentleman to get by, before she would join with Margaret in a silent beaming as the best form of greeting they could manage. (They were so circumspect, she saw, that only the woman

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sitting beside Margaret was aware of what had happened, and even she, though obviously inclined to get up and let Sally have the seat, respected their desire not to have a stir).

"Amazing," Sally murmured, "how perfectly amazing!"

Margaret nodded, her eyes shining with tears, her face shining with happiness as she felt that their meeting was, out of its pure fortuitousness, full of wonder and possibilities.

Holding Margaret's hand, Sally continued to smile as her mind rattled away, remembering the hatred—nursed, forgotten, reanimated, forgotten, but all these years somewhere near at hand—remembering with immense relief that Margaret had said she was merely visiting; finding herself willing to encourage a superstition that had bounded up in her that Fate was fulfilling a prophecy made when they were girls (a view of them in funny old clothes and long hair, sitting together in a window seat went through her mind). Then she thought impatiently, it's too silly! and said aloud, "Oh, let's get off this car, it's so ridiculous—let's find a teashop!"

Obediently Margaret turned her head to stare out of the window, looking for a teashop (though oughtn't it to be a tea *room?* Only the English, she thought, spoke of shops). Her spirit sank with dread as she recognized Sally's old, impetuous, harried, artificially gay tone, but she still remained fascinated by their meeting as she admitted to herself that if Sally and their friendship with its abrupt parting, had stuck in her mind, unresolved, she must in that case have secretly felt all along, with excitement as well as apprehension, that they would meet again. And here they were, met: it was momentous. Suddenly she cried in surprise, "There!" as a tearoom remarkably flashed by, and she got to her feet, clutching her bag and book in one hand, Sally's arm in the other, relieved that the situation had been saved so soon.

They progressed together to the front of the car. When at last it stopped they jumped down and began to exclaim, but they must hurry out of the street; and on the sidewalk, as they turned again to each other there were people busily passing, and Sally cried, "Oh damn . . . here!" and rushed down the street, into the restaurant Margaret had found.

Margaret saw she had been lucky—it was a decent restaurant, with the familiarity of leather nooks, white tablecloths, gentle lights, a few people and those quiet, almost reflective, enjoying a prudent mid-afternoon relaxation.

"At last, at last, finally!" Sally said, sitting violently down on the leather seat. "After twenty years—is it?—we must meet in a streetcar!

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Margaret, how glorious this is!" And, because now that the first shock of surprise was over she mainly wanted to be friends again, wanted again Margaret's understanding, she regretted this first lie—she found nothing glorious; as soon as she had entered the restaurant she had loathed it. Its tinkle of china exasperated her, aggravating her resentment of their fulfilling so abjectly the convention that simply because she and Margaret had happened on each other they must at once fly to the first haven offered and act out a lively interest. And though she acknowledged her interest she took pleasure in not allowing her resentment of it to be lessened (this was typical of her, she thought). So to Margaret she presented her irritation in its envelope of gaiety, reserving for herself her other attitudes, other feelings; and went on brightly, deliberately striking false notes, "Now! Now we shall look at each other!" and ostentatiously followed her own admonition, though she had already seen (and Margaret moreover knew she had seen) the sameness of Margaret's tall, handsome figure in the handsome black suit, of her thoughtful, not pretty face, of her white gloves (Margaret had always loved white gloves), which Margaret now pulled slowly off. Sally looked at the white gloves, the narrow hands, and suddenly her eyes filled with tears—"Dear Margaret!" she said tenderly, remembering the old intimacy of confidence, wanting passionately to renew it with the infinitely fuller knowledge she had gained, and that Margaret had so clearly gained as well—what a rich and documented story they could tell *now!*

But because Margaret, at last sinking down on the soft seat, only smiled shyly with her curious lagging response, Sally's annoyance recaptured her and compelled her to be brisk, to speed things up, with quick and gay words to prevent herself from showing her annoyance, which she felt would weaken her position. "Well!" she cried, "that's over! What a relief! *You* look well, *I* look well, we haven't aged hideously (aren't we lucky?) and now we can get on!"

"Yes, we look well," Margaret said absently, gazing across the small white table; suddenly breaking out, "Oh Sally, my dear, what's been happening to you all these years? It must, it really must, be good things!"

As she answered, "Well, some good things, anyway," Sally thought, yes, Margaret would want it to be good things, she really would; and she was ashamed to have already tried to hurt Margaret, frightened to have already allowed herself to put the mean wish to get the better of Margaret ahead of the wish to share equally with her a new illumination.

Here the waiter intervened, a small sandy man, and Margaret

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said at once, indifferent, "Toast and coffee please—" the first thing that came into her head. (She was not accustomed to having tea: she wondered dimly if Sally was.) But Sally, still unable to let go of the theatrical, against her will and yet with enjoyment, became irritating. She seized the menu with a harrassed expression of being unprepared for this crisis, studied it, frowning as if bewildered, and only after some seconds of discomfort shared alike by Margaret and the waiter, said, as if at her wits' end, "I'll have that too," and threw down the menu. The waiter sighed inconspicuously and went away.

Observing this familiar dramatization, Margaret now carefully gave her face an expression of placidity, not only in an attempt to force dissimulation out of Sally and to slow down the pace they were going, but to quiet her for a moment in order that she herself might become fully aware of all she found herself attaching to their presence together.

"Are you here for long?" Sally asked.

While she replied vaguely, "For a month, about," and while Sally busied herself with a package of cigarettes, Margaret tried to discover what caused her sense of implications, of latencies. It was not just the past, she thought, their mutually unknown pasts, which could here be revealed. It was not simply an opportunity to tell someone what had been happening. It was far more, and the significance she saw in it took her breath away, because it seemed to her it might carry them into an experience that would give a new meaning to all the idle areas of the past, a new importance, a utility. For between her and Sally there already existed a pattern and in revealing their pasts both the revelation and the past itself could be fitted into the pattern. It could be, given full cognizance from them both, a rarity, a completion utterly satisfying—and of the same indefinable quality she realized suddenly, as she had been receiving over and over again, in lesser ways, from the streets and houses of the revisited city: it could be a culmination of enormous proportion. For was there not something suggestive in their having, as girls, spoken of everything under the sun, of love, death, hope, of Shakespeare and Milton, of exaltations on looking out of their bedroom windows in the middle of the night, of the young men whom they endowed with all the virtues in order that the fantasy of being loved might become extraordinary, of their cynical appraisal of the world, of all their feelings about everything they knew? And was there not, here, now, the fulfillment of the old suggestion, in their meeting again now that love, death and hope had run through their own hands, that they had been reading Hamlet for twenty years since they last talked about it, that

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the seeds of cynicism had flowered, withered, been planted in other ground? It was possible for them, indeed breathtakingly possible, to open the doors on which they had knocked in youth, with a gesture to reveal the riches beyond; possible for each of them to reveal to a woman unseen, almost unthought of but always somewhere at the back of the mind, two decades of the life once envisioned and now a reality.

Their eyes met, Margaret's blazing with excitement: a glance of recognition passed between them. Ah! Sally thought, dropping her match carefully into the tray, she would tell Margaret everything; her heart thrilled painfully as she realized she could, even, tell Margaret—as she had never been able to tell anyone else—about death, could spread over it the words at last that would wholly unfold for her the meanings she had found in it from her father's long agony, her sister's tragedy; that she could talk for once of the intricacies and subtleties she had explored in marrying John, the degradation and miserable end which had so peculiarly enriched her. Only by Margaret could she hope to be understood in speaking of the year in which she couldn't sleep but had walked incessantly, thinking incessantly, testing the validity of her courage to keep on living in the small town, to keep on teaching school, to keep on pointing implacably to the summits to students who understood no terrain but that of the desert nor desired to understand any other, in explaining the curious circumstance that in finally finding her courage valid it had in the same moment vanished and never returned. Only Margaret would recognize the oddity, without the presence of courage, of the chirping comfort of amateur theatricals which she laughed at but did not despise, the remarkable cheerful willingness, even eagerness, to grow old. And certainly only to Margaret could be revealed the poems written out of every particle of her passion and thrown away, inferior.

"We never wrote," she announced abruptly, her bony hand, still consciously awkward, picking at the napkin delicately, with nervous loathing.

Margaret shook her head, saying abstractedly, "I never trusted letters—that is, after I stopped gushing into them," watching the hand with fascinated and abhorring recollection of a gesture she had years ago hated, knowing it was in an obscure way a gesture of contempt toward herself and frustrated from expressing her objection to it by the fact of its apparent innocence—it was, after all, only a napkin that the hand, with its delicate, finicky annoyance, despised.

Sally saw Margaret watching her hand: she forced herself to drop the napkin with the flicking gesture of impatience and exaspera-

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tion. For Margaret's extorted and resentful gaze had reminded her of how they had wilfully, ruthlessly put a wall of silence between them twenty years ago, a wall of silence erected decisively and in unacknowledged agreement by each of them after their last meeting, when they had talked with no lessening of affection of arranging a weekend visit to Margaret's home; erected when they had never written, either of them, to arrange the visit, when they had never again communicated with each other, but had withdrawn simultaneously behind that malevolent silence. And Sally folded her hands, secretly rejoicing in her success in still irritating Margaret. Yet she hesitated over her joy; for what she really wanted, she thought, was to brush aside everything from the past in order to . . . weep? perhaps to laugh? She laughed now nervously, saying, "Oh, letters . . . " scorning letters, and went on, rushing into words without meaning in order to begin somewhere, anywhere, as long as she left her treacherous rancor behind. "So we'll have to explain now. I," she bobbed her head, "teach school, as you might have expected. But don't be alarmed, I'm no sad, dreary schoolteacher with dust in my hair. I'm to be assistant superintendent next term, very important, won on merit. . . . " This tone was disastrous; she could see it plainly, Margaret was already looking weary —but it was too early, too unprepared for, to plunge to the deeper level of the irony in her being promoted only because she was so much superior to any one else in the school that she had no business being there at all; and she added abruptly, "The students hate me. But I don't care. It's good for their souls." And this was no better, it was clear Margaret found the words repellent; yet she could not allow herself to unfold the idea they contained, to describe the strange gain to herself to have realized out of the students' dislike an increased sense of self and place—even though she knew Margaret would infallibly recognize the dignity that lay in this hard unpleasantness, even though it was for this kind of understanding from Margaret that she longed.

"I'm sure it is," Margaret said, smiling to eke out the inadequacy of this reply, amused and at the same time violently agitated to find Sally dominating her still, having the same effect on her she had had as girl, leaving her dumb. Where, she asked herself in real astonishment, had the assurance she had finally won disappeared to before Sally? Where was the confidence she had secured from having been loved, admired, respected, from having been at ease with very famous people? Where, in short, was herself, Margaret, now that Sally's artificiality again dominated her own candor by making candor slightly laughable?

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"Your turn!" Sally cried, with a thump of her fist on the table.

The waiter returned to put their coffee and toast before them (it was absurdly more like breakfast than tea, Margaret thought in sudden exasperation). They were silent as his hands moved over the table. He seemed, Margaret thought as the rush of her feeling changed into sadness, to be trying to efface himself, as if he had interrupted at so many unpropitious moments, been so resented that he was a little desperate. Finally he smiled faintly and retreated.

"Your turn!" Sally repeated.

"Oh, I?" Margaret said, thinking about the waiter, and then she fixed her attention. "Oh, my husband's Joshua Sydney," she said, and wondered why she should give this fact as an explanation of what she had been doing; and realized she had given it out of spite, in return for having felt Sally's domination. Because Sally, she knew, and could indeed see it in her face, would be familiar with the obscure literary journal Josh had been editing all these years. But am I here for hostility? she asked herself, and in a quick fright of losing everything she sought to adjust her vision of an immense occasion, to the reality of Sally across the table, to find the key to open the occasion to them both.

"Really?" Sally was asking, her face bright, animated. "How extraordinary! I've been reading his magazine for years, the only person in the whole of the valley who ever heard of it!"

"I knew you would!" Margaret cried, clasping her hands involuntarily in a gesture of pleading, delighted that Sally should know Josh. "We have such fun!" she said impetuously, through her mind in an instant—and dazzling her with her own good fortune—going all the exciting toil and worry, the procession of great men bringing in manuscripts, coming to parties, to the parties for which she had never lost her childish love.

"I almost sent some poems to it once," Sally said abruptly, "but I threw them away instead." And she saw pass over Margaret's face the unmistakable shadow that came from knowing about the difference between true poets and false: Margaret, Sally saw, was going to hurry past this, not wishing to hurt her, not wishing to reveal her knowledge of how many people thought they could write poetry and had no justification in thinking so. And Sally realized she could never mention poetry again, that poetry written was not the same thing as poetry dreamed of being written, that it could not be spoken of to Margaret now because she knew too much, that pity and a kind of integrity of an ideal would no longer allow in Margaret the generosity with which she had once accepted such dreams. Sally shuddered

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for giving herself away to Margaret's pity. But also she was frightened of, and trying to fight off the beginning of a perception that she and Margaret had entered a blind street: she rushed forward. "It was such awful poetry, full of spring and robins!" That this was at the same time literally the truth and an outrage to her intensity of effort made her laugh sharply.

"Oh," Margaret said, very obviously summoning her capable manner, smiling, "but perhaps you couldn't tell? Poets so often can't!"

Though she knew exactly what value Margaret attached to this, Sally, because her dread mounted now as she wanted passionately to speak with the full weight of the things she had to tell, recklessly forced a deception on herself, forced herself to believe Margaret was not being polite but was acknowledging faith. Gratitude for Margaret's faith might help her to get on to the other things. She looked up, meeting Margaret's eyes, and said explosively, "I married John d'Acosta, you remember him?—the boy I used to talk about so much?"

"Oh?" Margaret said, occupied with the distressing fact that Sally still wrote poetry; and then as she realized who John d'Acosta had been, concealing her horror.

"Yes," Sally said, "it was absurd . . . " (because she had made him marry her, but the words would not come out). "It was obviously all wrong from the beginning . . . " (not because, as she knew Margaret was thinking, John was wrong, but because she had loved him all the wrong ways . . . and these words would not come out either). "He drank, and wouldn't get a job, and within the first week he was seen downtown with another girl. I had to give it up, I divorced him after eight months. It was awful."

Awful? Margaret repeated to herself, dismayed to find Sally still theatrical, even about this, still the wrong side of honesty—and why? why, when below the bright surface of her eyes lay enough pain to make an old friend cry out for her?

"And Father died, of cancer, in terrible pain, and Alicia was killed soon after, in an automobile accident."

"Oh," Margaret wailed softly, appalled—the older sister dead, in an automobile accident? "Oh, tell me. . . . "

Sally thought of the incredible number of months when she and Alicia had visited her father in the hospital twice a day, the ghastly optimism, the horror of seeing her father gradually sink into a querulous demand for more and more optimism; the black smash that had been the end of Alicia; the enormous guilt she had slowly expiated day by day—it seemed she would never come to the end of things

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she could remember saying to them, or not saying, the lies, the failures, the cruelties; the realization finally that she would never expiate the guilt, that it had become part of everything she did, adding to everything a singularly beautiful luster. She was now, lifting her coffee cup, saturated in the idea of death. Remembering suddenly the stiff-faced undertaker, she laughed and said, "The funerals were the worst part, really ghastly. . . . " Then she added, "But that's all over now, thank goodness." And when she looked at Margaret, who shrank away, she saw that they had fallen into a crude misunderstanding; that Margaret thought she meant she had fortunately got all over the deaths, when she had meant merely the disappearance of undertakers and flowers. With a phrase she could clear up the misunderstanding: but it marked to her the end, it put them within the boundaries of farce. So, instead of speaking the phrase, deliberately she put on her courageous smile.

Margaret saw with bitterness the courageous smile, the same courageous smile, she thought, that Sally had affected as a girl doomed to be misunderstood. Impossible, impossible! she cried to herself. "Yes, I expect it was dreadful for you," she said with an effort toward polite consolation, while she felt the past shrink into nothing behind them, and she thought: we talked about the future easily enough, but now that it's all happened we close the door on it—oh, wretched, wretched cowards! In agitation she broke her toast in half, thinking for an instant of pleading with Sally for honesty. But it was unthinkable; for it wasn't wholly Sally's pretense that had brought the occasion to ruin, any more than it was her own fastidiousness (that had, she knew, prevented her from helping Sally to escape from pretense). Perhaps the gap was too huge, perhaps twenty years was too long. How, over a small white tea table, could one sum up, present the important thing? What could she herself say, beyond, "I am so happily married . . . "? It seemed to her now that to attach subtle meanings to their former friendship, their unnatural quarrel, was to be made a fool of: it was neither because they had been friends nor because they had ended enemies that they failed now—they could have been merely acquaintances and failed, beloved sisters and failed: the occasion itself was what dominated everything, it loomed over them, an occasion wholly for failure and defeat. She might have known, she might have known! she cried to herself, crumbling her toast; she might have known the occasion would overwhelm them, she might have guessed that she would have to be content with the voiceless streets and houses of the city! She listened incredulously to Sally's continuing conversation:

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" . . . and the dreadful flowers the students in my classes sent! Freesias, you know, those repulsive flowers, whole bushes of freesias—if freesias grow on bushes? And they also sent delegations to the funerals, poor, sad little delegates!" Because, Sally was thinking as she chattered, we've made a failure, and so let's really have a circus! So that's the prophecy, she thought gleefully, that we should begin where we left off, as if nothing had happened in between! Now all that was lacking was a last mocking touch: she could easily furnish that—it was her talent for drama, simply, that was needed—and bringing to an end her discourse on the funerals, she asked, surrendering them to the puerility of reminiscence, changing her tone innocently to one of clattering vivacity—"By the way, do you remember old Miss Finch, the English teacher? I saw her the other day. Poor old thing—do you remember the time she cried for joy over Hester McDonald's composition?"

Margaret, lifting bland and blank eyes, replied, "Of course, it was a composition on 'My Summer Vacation.' Funny Hester, I haven't thought of her for years . . . " while she set about finishing her coffee in order the sooner to be able to look at her watch and exclaim over being late for an appointment.

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Books

WASTE AND CASTE

THE LOST WEEKEND. *By Charles Jackson. Farrar & Rinehart.* $2.50.
CHRONICLE OF DAWN. *By Ramon J. Sender. Doubleday, Doran.* $2.50.
THE HUNTED. *By Albert Guerard. Alfred A. Knopf.* $2.50.
STRANGE FRUIT. *By Lillian Smith. Reynal & Hitchcock.* $2.75.

THESE FOUR novels, selected simply because they looked interesting, turn out to have striking similarities. All describe the regression or restriction of the self in weak and defeated men (three of them writers). In two of the novels the defeat is the significant result of significant social experience. In the other two it is, dramatically speaking, causeless, but permits the author or reader vicarious satisfactions of an understandable and unpleasant kind. Each of the four "heroes" is loved by an admiring, cherishing, rather unbelievable woman, selfless and good, a woman who is more than the mother sought by those rejecting maturity. With her loving repose set against the limitless cruelties and aggressions of the outer world, she seems to represent a turning away from masculinity itself.

Despite this, two of the books, *The Lost Weekend* and *Chronicle of Dawn,* can be read with almost light-hearted wonder because of their authors' illusive skill in substituting an interior world for the real one. As in comedies, fairy tales and dreams, plausible events occur in exaggerated form and with abnormal inconsequence, the demands of society can go unheeded, our anxieties are relieved, and the hero—pathetic, weak, ingenious, lovable, boastful—survives moral or physical violence that in our world would surely destroy him.

The vision of *The Lost Weekend* is completely infantile. Don Birnam makes parents of his brother Wick and the girl Helen. They feed and clothe him, give him money, tend his wounds, protect him from temptation. Unlike parents, they never reproach or punish, they demand nothing from him, not even the return of their love. It is the ideal neurotic situation, shaped and justified by abandonment to drink.

When Wick and Helen do try, tactfully and intelligently, to prevent Don's drinking, they become authorities to be tricked and circumvented; the quest for liquor becomes a glorious game without rules or penalties, but with enough hazards and difficulties to make it exciting. The reader, accepting the premise of alcoholic irresponsibility, seeing the situation entirely from within Don Birnam's mind, not allowed to know enough

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of Wick and Helen to feel their unhappiness, joins freely in the thefts, deceptions and betrayals. When the effort is successful and the liquor obtained, an orgy of ecstatic self-love begins, of medicated euphoria, of fantasied omnipotence. Here the companionship is less agreeable. Neither in learning, imagination nor style is Don Birnam—or Charles Jackson—a De Quincey.

The book would not make such easy and conscienceless reading if there were any perspective by which Birnam could be seen as object. He has a college English major's taste for literature, but no acquaintance with politics or ideas. His plight is explained casually by a couple of traumatic shocks coming very late in his development. He has not even the dignity of his approaching doom. The reader can feel superior to him without fear or pity. The book is obviously autobiographical and so much better than might have been expected from Don Birnam that we know, without having to go through the anguish of it, that he must have made a magnificent recovery in the same miraculous way that money is always turning up for him in the book.

Only two valid fears haunt his dream. One is the memory of Portuguese fishermen at Provincetown who, polite and subservient in the summer, came, after the season was over, to torment and threaten him at night in his lonely shack. The other is the possibility of his losing his mind. Both threaten his only real value, a protected, secure world in which he can enjoy the self-contemplation of narcissism, and the imaginative realization of all wishes.

This fear of the impairment of the self from within parallels (but with how much less emotion and drama and meaning!) the threat of impairment of the self from without in the real world of the concentration camps, where the chief effort of the prisoners who escape physical destruction is to will the retention of the self with which they entered, and the chief purpose of the camp is to degrade and transform that self.

The character whose boyhood Ramon Sender pretends to record in *Chronicle of Dawn* is interned in a French camp after Republican defeats in the Spanish war. As long as resistance to Franco lasts, he studies his artillery textbook and prepares to return to the fight. But when Madrid and Valencia surrender, he loses interest in the present. Giving his chances to escape to others, he spends his time writing the reminiscences of his childhood. When the book is finished, he lets himself die, since he feels that men of virtue and dignity can no longer live in the European present without being corrupted.

This attitude seems unnatural to the vitality and self-confidence of the boy whose adventures are related and in whose experiences Sender must have shared. The narrator, with whom Sender expresses disagreement, is apparently used to explain the unworldly detachment of these memoirs, which in turn are credible only as the narcissist fantasies of a defeated man, for they attribute to the delightful Pepe, a favored

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upper-middle class boy, constant good fortune and inner freedom that are characteristic not of life but of a sharp selecting and transforming memory.

In this respect the experiences of *Chronicle of Dawn* are surprisingly like the experiences of *The Lost Weekend* with the important differences that Pepe is an imaginative boy and not a sentimental man of 33, that he is well and not sick, and that he is genuinely admired and genuinely capable of outgoing love, the only protagonist of any of these four novels of whom this is true. But he is constantly in trouble, constantly performing aggressive and prankish stunts of the most destructive kind, yet nothing really disturbs him, he always escapes serious punishment, and always retains the warm love of the girl Valentina and the protecting, astonished adults.

Pepe has the same dreams of omnipotence as Don Birnam, but he actually accomplishes them in an apparently real world. His goal, picked up from a hymnal, is to be "Lord of Power, Love, and Wisdom," and with the other boys, whom he leads, with Valentina, and with his examiners, he is these things. But the book goes far deeper than *The Lost Weekend* in dreaming away burdens. Sender seems deliberately to take the most disquieting symbols and give them a counter-Freudian innocence. One scene, for instance, perfectly represents the castration fear which is supposed to haunt boys. In showing off before Valentina, Pepe wounds his finger with a gun. He conceals this from his father, who thinks he is going insane, and takes him off to the doctor who finds a bullet embedded in the joint. The doctor praises him extravagantly for his courage, and wins over the father. Pepe comes home a hero, undisturbed.

Pepe is a Spanish Tom Sawyer, with none of Tom's fears, regrets, moral scruples. He is always confident, naive and high-spirited. He "immolates" pigeons and sprinkles their blood on Valentina; he finds his way through underground passages near an old castle among ancient coins, manuscripts and the bones of the long dead. After telling a peasant that the doctor would pay for such bones, if cleaned, he comes upon him stirring in a boiling pot the fresh corpse of a woman. But this horror is taken as lightly as the excitement of keeping bullfrogs in a hotel bathroom. His world receives his every impulse and transforms it to his greater glory. Only in the last sentence does the shadow fall again.

Albert Guerard does not give the illusion of freedom in a private world. John Richmond in *The Hunted* is seen from the outside, shrunk to something less than his natural dimensions. His is not the irresponsibility of the alcoholic or the spiritual withdrawal of a defeated hero. He is a responsible person in a real world, contemptible but unimportant. Like Don Birnam, he is infantile, incapable of anything except self-love and living in daydreams of power. Don Birnam looked constantly in mirrors; John Richmond makes records of his own readings

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and plays them over to himself. Don Birnam imagined himself a great pianist or Shakespearean actor; John Richmond, locked in his office, stages fights between pieces of paper. On one is written his own name, on the other the name of the reigning heavyweight champion. John always wins.

Why should Guerard have undertaken once again to demolish this familiar figure of satirical novels and college campuses, the futile, affected, middle-aged poet and teacher, still trading on the promise of some early verse? His is hardly the figure that threatens us in the present world. Guerard's intensity is understandable only if it is interpreted as rebellion against those qualities in himself—sensitivity, imagination, culture, learning—that seem to have failed him or to have made present realities that much more difficult to bear. There is a good deal of masochism in the elaborate public humiliation of one of the least admirable possessors of those qualities.

Like Don Birnam, John Richmond has a lovable woman completely devoted to him, a singing waitress in a nearby milltown whom he married in a moment of desperation and took back to live at the college with him. She accepts his values, tries to conform, loves him for the child he is. But full of neurotic jealousies and the need to hurt, John betrays Claire in more ways than Don Birnam did Helen. The dissolute students and prying faculty wives hasten the destruction of the marriage, which breaks up against the grandiose background of a flood and a manhunt, grotesquely unsuited in their violence to the pettiness of the principal character.

Guerard sets up no counter-values to the ones he degrades, unless they are in the line of army trucks that come roaring through at the end. Not only are there no ideas or social implications, but the explanations of how the characters came to be are even more sketchy than in *The Lost Weekend*. John Richmond and the Bomber, the hunted man, who is a pathological liar, a rapist, a swindler of college students, are each given a few disturbing memories like those of Don Birnam, gestures toward case histories which are part of the formula of fashionable novels. Why the symbolic heroine, with a highly pathogenic history of state farms and degrading employment, turns out to be so completely healthy, loving, unselfish, is left a wishful mystery.

In *Strange Fruit* by Lillian Smith, which is the most serious, though not the best, of these novels, the history is complete and terrible, and fully involves the responsible reader. Tracey Deen, an upper-middle class Southerner, was nursed at the breast of a Negro mammy who loved and cared for him, and whom he loved. A grown man, surrounded by white women, wife, sister, and sweetheart who wish to shape his life, women who are frigid or incomplete, he continues his long romance with a Negro girl who completely satisfies him in the moments he is with her. But the social pressures of his daytime life finally conquer

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his divided self, and he repudiates the Negro girl in a scene as shocking as that in which John Richmond turns on Claire, but infinitely more moving and significant.

On the part of the Negroes the restriction and degradation of personality that the Southern ethos demands is unforgettably described as a conscious adaptive process. The intelligent Negro doctor learns to act like a vaudeville Sambo before white men so they will not stop his work out of resentment. Negro mothers, knowing what is ahead, deliberately train sensitive and imaginative Negro children to assume the "racial" characteristics that white people demand in them. It is hard to see how anyone reading this book could ever again see the Negro character or type as anything but a mask deliberately, rebelliously, neurotically assumed in a huge Dachau of the master race.

But *Strange Fruit* has unfortunate similarities to the other novels I have discussed. Tracy Deen, in his ideas and career, has weaknesses that do not result necessarily from his emotional conflict, and that presumably are not characteristic of other Southern men who love Negro girls. Nonnie, his mistress, idealized like Helen or Claire or Valentina, is made, out of regard to readers' sensibilities, a very unrepresentative Southern Negress, aloof, self-contained, a college graduate, looking white in the moonlight, like the octoroons of the abolitionist tracts. Nor is the lynching which dominates the second half of this book a probable consequence, in either a statistical or Aristotelian sense, of the relationship described so effectively in the beginning. Done well, it gives no new insights, and by its greater violence, like the violence at the end of Guerard's book, distracts us from the lessons of the early pages. But of these four novels it is *Strange Fruit* alone which makes the malformation of the self not something happily given for clarity of dramatic focus, but the projection and criterion of a social situation in which we are inextricably involved and which does not permit us to feel a detached and relieved superiority toward those whose inadequacies we are helped so clearly to see.

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS

RULES FOR FISHING IN AN EMPTY SEA

HOW TO THINK ABOUT WAR AND PEACE. *By Mortimer J. Adler. Simon & Schuster.* $2.50.

IN THE first 287 pages, Professor Adler demonstrates the following: (1) "War" is to be defined as conflict between independent sovereign nations, and is therefore always *possible* so long as independent sovereign nations exist. (2) "Peace" is to be defined as a state of affairs in which war is *impossible*. So long as war is still possible, there can be at best a "truce," not "real peace." (3) Peace, consequently, can be secured by,

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and only by, the elimination of independent sovereignty in a single world government.

On p. 288, he notes: "The means to prolonging the truce which will postpone the next world war do not need discussion here." He contents himself, in the 13 pages remaining to his text, with the thousandth or so repetition of the thesis of the first 287 pages.

It is true that many other word combinations appear. For example: "Wars will continue to occur until we succeed in making peace." "If and when world government exists, both external sovereignty and political independence will become meaningless." "To understand the possibilities of peace is to know the minimum conditions for its realization." "To desire an end, but not its requisite means, is obviously self-defeating." "There is always the danger of proving too little or too much." "It [peace] is certainly impossible if the obstacles to it reside in any unchangeable features of human nature." "Reason can prove that there is a middle ground between tomorrow and infinity."

It is something of a triumph, I suppose, to write a 301 page book without saying anything, but Professor Adler has long shown himself a formidable warrior in these verbal tourneys. As master of tautology there is probably no man alive to rank beside him.

Unfortunately, we cannot dismiss his book as a kind of academic joke. There is, naturally, no point in discussing its supposed subject matter, since there is nothing to discuss. There is only a series of mechanical manipulations of what is already implicit in his dozens of definitions. Who could possibly question the demonstration I have cited in the first paragraph, or the string of tautologies in the third? Or who could possibly learn anything from them? They cannot be questioned because they are empty of the slightest significant content.

But Adler is also the most noted fellow-traveler of the Catholic Church; a champion in the crusade to rid the land of the heresies of naturalism and empiricism; and the brains of the powerful educational movement that is fronted by Robert M. Hutchins, Mark Van Doren, St. Johns College, and the 100 Great Books.

So, since he here undertakes to tell us how to think, in general and about a very important question, we must at least observe what his method for thinking amounts to, and where it will get us. We may sum up quickly: it will get us to exactly where we started from. This it will do, and no more, because the whole method consists merely in laying down a variety of definitions and then grinding out various formal equivalences and consequences of these. Facts, dreary, pedestrian facts, are at no point relevant.

The layman often finds, surrounding the method, that aura of precision and profundity which causes the reviewers to be so respectful. This, however, is altogether an illusion. The precision is not even word deep, for the words are often not merely vague but ambiguous. The

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profundity is no more than the set of popular attitudes associated with terms like "real," "basic," "nature," "universal," "eternal," "fundamental," and with elementary logical forms like the dilemma and the disguised tautology.

The payoff, of course, is in the definitions, upon which the structure, with its patches, rests. These, where they are more than simple identities, are ordinarily compounded about equally of nonsense and reactionary prejudice. They summon us away from experimental science and the historical world with which it deals, back—or forward is it now?—to the realm of moral, metaphysical and theological absolutes, to the land, that is, where conduct is imposed by the command of the mighty announced as "natural law," where thinking for yourself is a sin against the eternal verities.

Let me display the method by a final quotation:

"Men are by nature born for such freedom [of citizenship], but nothing else than liberal education can discipline men for the political use of freedom which is the meaning of citizenship.

"The dilemma we face is as onerous as it is inescapable. *Either* all men who do not have to be put into asylums for their own and the public welfare can be liberally educated *or* all men do not have enough intelligence to discharge the duties of citizenship."

This silly dilemma—which, besides, is formally obscure, since the second half can correctly mean only "some men do not have enough intelligence to discharge the duties of citizenship," which is not such a startling possibility—is self-constructed. It is just another way of saying what is already said in the arbitrary, dogmatic, and unmotivated preceding sentence. But it is offered with all the flourish of some devastating intellectual discovery.

And, when you think it over, what the whole sequence amounts to is simply another plug for St. Johns College.

JAMES BURNHAM

IDEAS AND MEMORIES

PERSONS AND PLACES: The Background of My Life. *By George Santayana. Scribners.* $2.50.

SANTAYANA speaks in an early chapter of this book of the ironic appropriateness of the fact that his own ancestors and those of Spinoza both lived in the same region of northern Spain. His debt to Spinoza is indeed very great, and has often been stressed, both by himself and his commentators. But it is primarily an intellectual debt, like his debt to the Greeks, and to that extent, perhaps, largely verbal. His decisive moral tendencies, antedating his philosophic speculations and surviving his philosophic doubts, have a cultural source. Their prototype is to be found not in Spinoza but possibly rather in Cervantes, who, in the very

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process of condemning an obsolete tradition, inadvertently celebrates it.

Cervantes and Santayana obviously have much in common. Both are intransigent realists who are none the less half-committed to the illusions they denounce. Both distrust the moral imagination, yet both ultimately succumb to it: both find in it something even more persuasive than the claims of reality, an ideal moral order that is an infallible index of the ugliness and disorder of life. The beautiful, Santayana tells us, has since boyhood remained for him imaginary. "That the real was rotten and only the imaginary at all interesting seemed to me axiomatic . . . it is still what I think." Undoubtedly the crucial paradox of Santayana's life and thought is his invincible devotion to a tradition from which he was irrevocably alienated. This sense of loss, exacerbated by poverty and by his removal at 8 to Boston, was an inescapable moral inheritance. His father's liberalism, "tolerant towards the minor vices . . . but ferociously closed against all higher follies," was almost wholly negative, and essentially anti-clerical; while his mother's piety was arid, unimaginative, moralistic: her Catholicism being purely nominal. Both he and his half-sister Susanna turned inevitably toward the Church, she going the whole way, briefly entering a convent, he remaining always, as he says, "at the church door." It was not faith that moved him but a kind of metaphysical hunger. His "faith indeed was so like despair that it wasn't faith at all; it was fondness . . . " "I heartily agreed with the Church about the world," he says, "yet I was ready to agree with the world about the Church."

It is of course just this diversity in his sympathies and allegiances, due largely but not wholly to his mixed background, that gives an hypothetical equivocal air to all his convictions on anything other than the most general issues, and makes him useless if not repugnant to anyone committed to a specific policy of belief or conduct. Moreover so radical a detachment, with its inevitably conservative implications, tends in a time like our own to appear factitious. And yet, for all its abstractness, or perhaps because of it, Santayana's basic moral position is immitigably just:

> "One step," [he tells us, recounting the genesis of his mature opinions] "one step was to overcome moral and ideal provinciality, and to see that every form of life had its own perfection, which it was stupid and cruel to condemn, for differing from some other form, by chance one's own. The other step, rising from the moral dissolution that might invade a man who cultivated an indiscriminate sympathy with every form of life, made it clear that sympathy and justice themselves are only relative virtues, good only in their place, for those lives or forms of life that thereby reach their perfection: so that integrity or self-definition is and remains first and fundamental in morals: and the right of alien natures to pursue their proper aims can never abolish our right to pursue ours."

Oddly enough, however, the book is weakest and dullest in its purely reflective passages; the discourse is vivid and pungent so long as it is firmly controlled by some specific narrative or descriptive subject matter.

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Elsewhere it tends to evaporate into a fog of doubtful generalities. The truth is indeed that the great distinction of Santayana's work lies not in its ideas but rather in its perceptions, its sympathy and its incomparable expressiveness. Intellectually his work is not only derivative (his materialism is hardly distinguishable from that of Leucippus and his skepticism is a mere sophistical exercise) but at many points banal. Its chief intellectual merit, no doubt, is that it succeeds in settling most of the questions it raises; yet the greatest philosophies are perhaps not those that settle old perplexities but rather those that generate new ones. Indeed, Santayana's thought is wholly committed to a profound skepticism regarding the constructive possibilities of philosophy; and in consequence it is he rather than his critics who has fostered the opinion that his achievement has mainly been "literary" in a pejorative sense. There is apparently a good deal of his father's negativism in Santayana himself.

Yet it is fatuous to deny that Santayana's achievement, despite its intellectual deficiency, is of a sort possible only to a mind immensely cultivated and immensely powerful—though, one might add, a mind, for all its irony and aloofness, at home only among concrete images and objects. The predominant visual bias of Santayana's intelligence, exemplified not only by his poetry and prose but by his passionate interest in architecture and by the talent for drawing which he inherits from his father, is of course, like every virtue, inevitably a limitation as well. Certainly his discussions of logic and cosmology are vitiated by it; for they have the specious inexactitude that suggests a man of genius bravely floundering in an alien medium. Yet this dominant pictorial interest, of which his realm of essence is a kind of hypostatization, gives his major work its most engaging theme, just as it gives the present volume its charm, its truth and its persuasiveness.

MARTIN LEBOWITZ

WAR AND THE INTELLECTUAL

JEAN MALAQUAIS' WAR DIARY. *Translated from the French by Peter Grant. Doubleday, Doran.* $2.75.

THE BOOK could have been published at this moment only because the army in which Malaquais served is out of the fighting. Its great novelty is that it is the product of a contemporary consciousness, one of the few of this kind to appear in recent years—which accounts for its cogency, sharpness, and most probably for the strong reactions it has aroused. Malaquais is contemporary because he is alienated, disabused, radical, and ambitious. For someone—like myself—who has served in a latter-day army, his book rings bells, is the first piece of writing I know of (except for some of Randall Jarrell's recent poems) to say anything to the point about behind-the-lines military life during World War II.

Beginning his diary, Malaquais seems to have made a Gidean reso-

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lution to be sincere: he would put down whatever he happened to think and feel, regardless of how it would look to a second person. He is well aware—as some reviewers have failed to realize—that certain of his reactions are priggish. And if many of his generalizations sound jejune, it is because the efforts of an amateur at philosophy to lift himself above an unpleasant situation by making philosophy out of it cannot but result in the jejune. He should be excused when he writes: "To say of life that it is the breast of a young girl, pointed toward the sky. That you have the right to be inebriated with life, to the ultimate ecstasy." He also writes: "I don't give a rap for 'accumulated experience.' This lost time will never, never, be regained."

An intellectual with subversive notions, you are put into mobile confinement together with a conglomeration of males under the assumption that the purpose of the confinement transcends all personal considerations. If the assumption is not acted on, brute force admonishes. Since you are cynical about the end being served by the confinement, you find that everything that happens to you and that you do in your official capacity as an inmate is irrelevant when not repugnant. It is worse for you than for the others because your vocation is a personal concern, you have sacrificed in order to make it so, while the others have allowed themselves to be at the disposal of the necessity of making a living. This is not snobbery. All of us are paying for our failure to be revolutionary and socialist, to take our live in our own hands. The war itself is one of the forms of that payment. But at the same time your principles make you liable to certain exalted sentiments: solidarity with your fellow men, the sharing of their fate, etc., etc. Malaquais found himself in an engineers' battalion along with a bunch of peasants whose conduct startled him into a new realization of how abject, dirty, and trivial human beings could be. There were also the ignominious details of routine and the incompetence and posturing of those in authority. You believe in the dignity of man and in his capacity to control his own fate. "That nothing, nothing, not man nor beast nor god, should be able to dispose of your life, except yourself." Your own life has been a struggle to make yourself do in the first place only what is relevant to yourself as the particular human being you are. You try to be conscious, to put yourself beyond the mercy of the petty detail, you don't fight for your place in line or quarrel as to whose turn it is to sweep the floor. But all around you you see men refuting every claim you make for them: insentient, foul, rude, servile, petty and obtrusive. Soon, your most anxious concern becomes to save yourself from the community of degradation and drabness which every person and every circumstance try to foist on you. You are willing to go through the same hardships—but only alone, for the mass of your fellow soldiers seem to vitiate every purpose you extract from the hardships. Contemplating them, smelling and hearing them, you fall into the sentimentality, perhaps true, of

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thinking what a sad thing a human being is. You desire to evolve, personally, into a new species.

You wince, hearing a man tell the barracks what he did with his wife while on furlough, not at the details so much as at the shamelessness and at what the exhibitionism typifies. You also mind it because you must go on hearing it without choice, because you cannot separate yourself sufficiently, and because it is not impossible that you may descend to the same level. Of course this is priggish, but how else are you going to react?

Malaquais anticipates the objection. Though congenitally a lonely character, he is enough a product of the generation of Hemingway, Stalinism, MacOrlan, Malraux and Jean Gabin to feel the categorical imperative to be tough and regular. He worries about his inability to get along with his fellows, who persecute him mildly and accidentally because he cannot keep himself from remonstrating with them. Derisively, they call him "the aristocrat." On November 4th, 1939, he writes in his diary: "A. G. [presumably André Gide, with whom Malaquais is on close terms] tells me that I ought to practice evasion. Compromise. Try to adapt myself to them. Dissimulate. Avoid headon collisions. Play my subtlest game of wits with people for whom subtlety is a dead letter. All of which, after all, I am radically incapable of doing. Ah, these great men, these dispensers of counsel—why don't they begin with themselves?" Malaquais fails to solve the problem to his own satisfaction, takes refuge in bouts of verbose and pretentious philosophizing. But later, when the actual fighting begins, he breaks out of his isolation by showing himself to be more enterprising and comradely than the average under fire. From then on his diary becomes like any other war book, his reactions as correct as any book-reviewer could desire. Not that this is stated explicitly. For all his conceit, Malaquais does not dream of dramatizing himself in the face of danger.

His experience posed under what were almost laboratory conditions the problem of the right attitude towards his fellow men, in the flesh, of the Marxist who is supposed to love them in the abstract. The conclusions which I would draw from Malaquais' (and my own) experience are rather trite. Man is lovable in the abstract and in the individual but not in the mass. Living together in boredom, men exhibit their lowest common denominator, which in the present state of civilization is usually their raw human animality, the pool of their most elementary demands. On November 30th Malaquais complains: "I wonder whether life in common does not engender some kind of moral virus which has the property of decaying and rotting the individual. Because each one of these men taken separately, put back in his own setting, returned to his native soil, his farm, his shop, is what is ordinarily called a 'good egg.' But, as someone said—I've forgotten who—that does not suffice to make a man." The rudeness of Malaquais's peasants—and they were as rude

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to each other as they were to him—may be ascribed to their lack of culture. They had enough for private life but were unequipped for any sort of communal life. Hegel seems to be right in his contention that one of the aims of culture is to transform the private into the public (Kierkegaard notwithstanding). Another common denominator exists among human beings, a paradoxical one, formed of that in each which is original and private. Culture enables the individual to communicate and appreciate inwardness, and make it objective. Whereas the failure of individuals to express their inwardness converts them into a mass, whereby they are denoted as having in common merely their membership in the human species of animal—or sinner. Malaquais' loneliness stemmed just as much from the absence of those who would have given him more of themselves to understand as from the absence of those who would have understood *him*. (Incidentally, the most surprising revelation in his diary is that the French peasant is just as badly off culturally as the Detroit factory worker.)

CLEMENT GREENBERG

POETRY IN WARTIME

WESTERN STAR. *By Stephen Vincent Benét. Farrar & Rinehart.* $2.50.

NO BOUNDARY. *By Lenore G. Marshall. Henry Holt and Company.* $1.75.

AFTERNOON OF A PAWNBROKER. *By Kenneth Fearing. Harcourt, Brace.* $2.00.

CLOTH OF THE TEMPEST. *By Kenneth Patchen. Harper & Brothers.* $2.75.

NEW POEMS. *By Dylan Thomas. Poets of the Year Series. New Directions.* $0.50.

UNDER THE CLIFF. *By Geoffrey Grigson. George Routledge & Sons. (London).* 5s.

THE MIDDLE OF A WAR. *By Roy Fuller. The Hogarth Press (London).*

THE NARROW PLACE. *By Edwin Muir. Faber & Faber (London).*

THE ORCHESTRAL MOUNTAIN. *By J. F. Hendry. George Routledge & Sons (London).* 5s.

THE ANGRY SUMMER. *By Idris Davies. Faber & Faber (London).*

THE TRIAL OF LUCULLUS. *By Bertolt Brecht (translated by H. R. Hays). Poets of the Year Series. New Directions.* $0.50.

THE styles, the forms, the personalities involved in the books listed above run a gamut from Kenneth Patchen's unrehearsed barroom chatter to Edwin Muir's sober if lyric lectures. Nevertheless one's final impression is much more of sameness than of diversity. Nobody, for instance, looms

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as a new hope for poetry; most of the poets—though not all—share certain not unfamiliar attitudes. I feel no special call to award precise merit badges and elect Eagle Scouts; under the circumstances it seems more profitable to inquire after the bases of this partial uniformity.

One half the business of contemporary poetry appears to be a bitter post-mortem on contemporary existence, seen, of course, through the selective microscope of self. The anatomy of the world in most of these poems will bring no relief to refugees from the newspapers. Nor, with such a program, has there been much place for a patriotic refurbishing of democratic ideals, or for a literature "that expresses the states of mind by which the race has risen" (to quote Oliver Allston). It is doubtful whether there has ever been a war that has got along with so little poetical inspiration. There have been patriotic poems, to be sure, in the columns where you would expect to find them; Tin Pan Alley has done its bit; and I understand General Patton has taken to poetical exhortation. But there has been no Rupert Brooke, and not even a Robert Service. As usual, in the Army the hand-made dirty songs have been a lot more popular than the machine-made patriotic ones. Perhaps the final irony for both MacLeish and his Irresponsibles has been that the Army and Navy have found no trouble at all in building their planes and launching their battleships *without* recovering "a faith in the expression of these things—the final things for which democracy will fight—in words."

The apparent exception to these generalizations is of course the late Stephen Vincent Benet's *Western Star*. The poem is a celebration of the American pioneer spirit: certainly an appropriate theme to express the states of mind by which the race has risen. Yet it should be noted that its choice was no response to the war. The poem was begun in 1934; and plainly it came out of no exhortations of the time, but out of Benét's continuing interest in American history and American lore.

The qualities of the poem are due to Benét's long and honest attachment to his subject. The poem has been extravagantly praised; but it does not deserve sneers as a counter-measure. The extravagance of the praise was inevitable, for two reasons: first, because it was the posthumous book of an amiable man who died too young; and second, because it is about the only serious poem published recently that even remotely approaches the recipe of the reformers of poetry in our time. The poem has some virtues: it conveys a genuine emotion about the difficult deeds of our ancestors, and it illuminates, not in a textbook fashion, some of the odd corners of our early history. Its rhythms are pleasantly varied to relieve the monotony of blank verse and to suit the mood. But that is about the list of assets. All the difficulties of the novel in verse remain: the frequent impression of slackness in the verse, the difficulties in transition from realism to lyric exaltation. Finally, the emotion of the book, honest though it seems to be, is essentially nostalgia rather than hope: it does not appear how Benét proposed to make the jump to modern

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application, now that the Census Bureau and Professor Turner have so long agreed that the frontier ended in 1890.

The other individual poets have little in common with Benét except the fact that their general attitudes seem to have been little altered by the war. I suppose the truth is that the war had been so long expected that its coming has meant confirmation rather than surprise; for the poets, the images of war's destruction have only intensified their portrait of the chaos of society and the agony of the isolated individual.

So in Mrs. Marshall's sensitive but rather fragmentary poems, the machinery of warfare appears chiefly as one more evidence of mankind's guilty interference with the calm blueness of the sky and the clean vastness of the ocean (her favorite images). Kenneth Fearing has made even less concession to the war, except for a poem on the dust jacket about war bonds, in the familiar style. Within the covers he is at it again, multiplying clichés to make a style of sorts, devising ingenious scenarios to convey his conviction about the world's second-hand emptiness. There was a line from "Agent No. 174 Resigns" in his last book of poems that might have been autobiographical: "I am tired of following invisible lives down intangible avenues to fathomless ends." If it was, it hasn't induced him to change his profession.

War has not altered Kenneth Patchen's conviction that all that is Patchen is art; in fact in *Cloth of the Tempest* he sets out to demonstrate this truism in drawing and collage as well as in poetry. On the other hand, war has made him angrier than most. This indignation, I think it should be said, quite frequently gives him a vitality more attractive than, say, Fearing's exhausted fatalism. There are a lot of good lines and good feelings in Patchen; the rarity is a whole poem. It is only once in a long while—I should say "May I Ask You a Question, Mr. Youngstown Sheet and Steel" is an example—that he can resist the tempation to spoil a good beginning with irrelevant cuteness, smartness, juvenile humor, or just plain self-congratulation. I suppose all this is part of his theory of art.

The English poets, with considerably more experience of the war than we, show no markedly changed attitudes either. Death and violence have always been among the big guns of Dylan Thomas' poetry. His mystical absorption in death-in-life and life-in-death *welcomes* any additional uncertainties (compare, for example, the sonnet "Among Those Killed in the Dawn Raid Was a Man Aged One Hundred"). As to the poetry in this new pamphlet, I confess to a certain disappointment. I have in the past found Thomas' poems fascinating, and I find these at least exciting. I suspect my disappointment may have something to do with the progress toward logical lucidity which the dust jacket advertises as a selling-point. The presence of a more conventional logical framework seems to make more evident the devices which produce so much of the explosiveness of his poetry: notably the misplaced and trans-

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ferred epithets and the violent incongruities of image. They seem now to be more contrived and rhetorical, less imaginative; though maybe it is only that their novelty is less striking at a later meeting.

Thomas is anyway a fish out of the orthodox water I have been describing; Geoffrey Grigson and Roy Fuller, on the other hand, are very definitely in it, and their differences are for that reason in one way illuminating. Grigson is a non-combatant poet, Fuller a combatant one; indeed he seems to me the best of those I have read, though I can't pretend to any full knowledge. Grigson's poems have a good deal of quiet charm. Most of their quality is in their sobriety, their even-tempered under-statement. One result is that the general bleakness of outlook, which he shares, does not blind his other perceptions; another is that he refuses to exaggerate the intensity of the woe in the world, or his own peculiar claim to it.

The combatant outlook—in Fuller, at any rate—is not basically different from the usual intellectual's orthodoxy. There is no hint at all of *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori;* there are not even those simple certainties—the values of companionship and compassion—which the angry poets in the last war swapped for the patriotic enthusiasms with which they had begun. But the feelings, as compared with Grigson, are all more nervous, more strained, more intense. What makes them so is the immediate and tangible presence of death in every poem, not as a subject for rumination or a convenient symbol of finality, but as a haunting and inescapable fear.

2.

After the analysis of dismay the other part of the orthodox business is the discovery of consolations. Most of the poets find some: for Mr. Grigson there are bitter-sweet memories of his childhood; for Mrs. Marshall there are oceans; and for Mr. Patchen there is always himself. But for Mr. Edwin Muir, in his *The Narrow Place,* the consolations considerably outweigh the dismay. Mr. Muir is essentially a Humanist poet of an old school; intelligent, devout, a little bookish, confident in man's essential goodness. For him the bleaknesses of the present are accidents: less real to his own experience than the consolations of love, the truths of orthodox Christianity, and the patient powers of good finally to wear away evil. "Now in this iron reign—I sing the liberty . . ."

Mr. Muir handles his Christianity as part of the given equipment to which a man of his culture is entitled. Mr. Hendry, however, in *The Orchestral Mountain* is out to create original religious experience. This he attempts by 1) a great sprinkle of the conventional geology of revelation: crystal, marble, alabaster, jacinth, coral, and assorted jewels; and 2) a constant air of extra-terrestrial description gained by combining concrete (but usually celestial) terms with abstractions at peculiar

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moments ("Absence is your smiling to the skies . . . "; "the chill dawn's feeling of utter agony grappling against the hard hailing stars . . . "). As far as I am concerned, heaven is exactly where it was before.

No doubt this is part of that rising resort to religion about which PR has been so exercised during the past year. There is certainly no doubt that it is becoming the big gun of poetic consolation: it is entirely possible that Eliot's *Four Quartets* may set a pattern as *The Waste Land* did twenty years ago. If so, I think it will be unfortunate: not because I do not respect Eliot's poem, but because I think its central experience is essentially less accessible than that of *The Waste Land*. My own guess is that a capacity for original religious experience is a talent as peculiar as musical genius, and probably rarer. Of poets with the true religious talent, there have been two kinds: the pure and confident mystics, like Vaughan and Blake; and the aspirers—like Donne, and, I should think, Eliot today—who make their poems out of their struggle to achieve "a condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything." There remain those who are convinced by the argument, or by any other pressures. They may still be unobjectionable as poets provided that they do not try to fake the religious emotion. But with poetry as with women's dresses, that fashion is dangerous which few are equipped to follow with any success.

By contrast the simple hope in the future of the common man seems a relief. Reading Idris Davies' *The Angry Summer*, one remembers how rare a proletarian poem is in these days. The prophets of a decade ago—Day Lewis and Auden, for example—are dumb, or whoring after strange gods; and fellow traveling is distinctly not in style. Hence *The Angry Summer* is today a distinct sport: it is a series of fifty short poems about the coal strike in the Welsh valleys in 1926. I find it oddly effective and moving, though it is not easy to say why. The propaganda is overt, the technique is comparatively naïve, the epithets are always the expected ones, or at least what *were* the expected ones before poets learned not to use them. Some of the simple and blunt words now begin to seem novel and refreshing:

The sleek one,
The expert at compromise
Is bowing in Whitehall.
And lackey to fox to parrot cries:
'The nation must be saved'.

But of course more important than the diction is the fact that the poem has direction, drive, and guts. It is saved from the black and white stiffness of straight propaganda poems by its clear love for and pride in the Welsh land and people; and in his concern for these things Davies forgets himself entirely.

Some of the same things apply to Bertolt Brecht's short radio play now published here by New Directions, though *The Trial of Lucullus* is

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a more sophisticated work than *The Angry Summer*. The play deals with the trial after his death of a Roman conqueror by the common people of Rome; and it achieves a moving indictment of imperial conquest. As a radio play it seems easily the most successful I have read: the diction is a stylized simplicity that manages to avoid rhetoric and bombast (with vulgarity the besetting sins of radio diction); the judgments are made with enough shading to avoid dogmatism; and the use of the supernatural seems to justify the fact that the characters speak as typical voices, not as people. But I suspect my main reason for liking it is much the same as with *The Angry Summer*: the fact that it has a simple and impersonal thing to say. I am not, of course, making a plea for simple propaganda poetry. I am simply recording a feeling that the orthodox manner has become, taken in large doses, simply dull. The difficulty is that one recognizes the attitudes in oneself, and is already a little bored with them.

The alternative is certainly not versified editorials. The effort at honesty with their own feelings which even bad contemporary poets show is not a negligible quality. The standard for technique too seems now admirable: reasonably tight in form; direct and colloquial in diction (the passion for fancy scientific and learned terms seems to be fading); not willfully obscure; for the most part cured of the personal mannerisms painfully learned first from Eliot and then from Auden. What is needed in addition is something to say with conviction. Where the conviction is to come from I can't pretend to know.

ANDREWS WANNING

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Correspondence

With Apologies to Some

Sirs:

I find that I unwittingly did an injustice to John Dewey in my article, "The Future of Democratic Values," in the July-August 1943 issue of PARTISAN REVIEW. In criticising his article in the "New Failure of Nerve" symposium, I objected to his exclusive concern with the religious aspect of the problem, as indicative of an unhistorical and politically conservative approach.

The fact is, as I knew at the time but failed to recall, his article was originally written for book publication and not for the PR symposium. It was thus unwarranted to make the criticism I did—although I think it fair to give some weight to Dr. Dewey's agreeing to publish his article in the "New Failure of Nerve" context. My criticism therefore applies fully only to the articles by Sidney Hook and Ernest Nagel.

Thank you for printing this note of correction and apology.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

New York, N. Y.

One Hit, One Error

Sirs:

May I tell you how thoroughly I enjoyed and was stimulated by Mario d'Andrea's penetrating review of *What To Do With Italy* by Salvemini and La Piana in your September issue. It alone was worth the price of the magazine many times over.

I can't refrain from commenting on the snide little crack about Patchen in your new department "Variety." I know that everyone I have talked to about this was disgusted by this underhanded "schoolgirlish" gibe at about the only American poet left who has any courage and integrity.

Jersey City, ARTHUR H. STURCKE

PR at the Front

Sirs:

It may please you gentlemen to know that some soldier or sailor has lugged a couple of copies of your magazine half way around the world until they are now in position where a husky chap could hit a Japanese Imperial Marine quite easily with one. It was quite a surprise to see a magazine of this type out here, for the kind matrons who send out their old magazines seem to have an inordinate predilection for Bernarr McFadden and *The Reader's Digest.* Suffice to say that I was very pleased and enjoyed your articles greatly.

EUGENE L. BURDICK,
LT. (j.g.) USNR

A Voice from Texas

Sirs:

The Saul Bellow story in your September-October issue was quite good, but the Bogan article seemed to lack punch. . . . The Fondane thing—one of the fellows down here read it and said it was "cute"—and that's about what it came to. The Auden poems were certainly a comedown for him. . . . He abuses his forms something fierce, seems to think that form is an end in itself, that it covers any amount of sterility, frigidity. "W. H. Auden" is a good name to have on a cover, but why not have it as a by-line for his memoirs? And why not print Eliot himself, not these renegade repentants who give such amateur impersonations?

I hope that you will go on printing people like Bellow and find others like him. And for godsake, tie a can to Sidney Hook & Co.! Otherwise, you have a helluva good magazine and I think it will get better now. The only thing that ever spoiled it for me was that "Voice in the Whirlwind" tone it used to feature. This issue softpedaled that at least, so it wasn't half so windy as usual. The good thing about PR and what keeps my interest up is the search for the good things that are *buried* in it. They are *buried,* but they are good.

CPL. HALSEY DAVIS

Moore Field, Texas

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The Rukeyser Imbroglio (cont'd)

Sirs:

Your defense of your attack on Muriel Rukeyser seems still to obscure the main issue: that, instead of criticizing an author's work, you have made unjustifiable charges about her character. You have made her sound like a slick careerist, whereas her writing shows her to have been throughout the past decade a convinced anti-fascist and radical democrat. Since you ask for specific evidence, I would advance these few points out of many:

(1) Your remark that Miss Rukeyser's first work "rode the bandwagon of proletarian literature" seems something less than candid, inasmuch as her poem in the 1935 anthology of that literature originally appeared, I believe, in PR, under the editorship of Rahv and Phillips.

(2) You convey the impressions that in *The Turning Wind* she veered away from radical convictions, since they were no longer "fashionable" by 1939. Such an impression cannot be substantiated by that book, with its continuing concern for Spain, for poverty and social inequalities at home, and, in particular, with its poem about Ann Burlak. The following sentences seem symptomatic of your method: "In one poem the turning wind was figured in the symbol of a man torturing an eagle. The eagle was not the blue eagle of the springtime of the New Deal." There is no "turning wind" in "Target Practice," the poem to which these sentences refer. Nor is there any political symbol in the bird, which is not specified as an eagle. Nor is there torture, since the bird is already dead, nailed up against the barn for a custom familiar to our West. The poem is about something else altogether: the shocked consciousness of a small boy, and the contrast between the dead bird and another soaring free.

(3) You say: "The Japanese did not astonish Miss Rukeyser, much as they surprised Admiral Kimmel and General Short." Why should they have astonished any student of Fascism? As early as 1936 Miss Rukeyser had written the captions for a film called *Stop Japan.*

(4) You say that her essay on posters hints that Miss Rukeyser "is now interested in the advertising game." She resigned from her position with the Graphics Division of the OWI on the ground that it was being run by advertisers. Her essay argued for the necessity of using all the techniques of popular art for militantly democratic ends. To shrug off propaganda as being somehow beneath the concern of a serious poet would be to retire to the now fashionable red ivory tower.

F. O. MATTHIESSEN

Cambridge, Mass.

Comment.—We are impressed neither by Matthiessen's citing of Miss Rukeyser's anti-fascist professions nor by his use of the term "radical democrat." Anti-fascism is nowadays so popular a concept as to cover a wide variety of political beliefs or lack of them. After all, both imperialist-minded politicians and socialists active in the European underground speak and act in the name of anti-fascism. And what, precisely, is a "radical democrat"? We are not aware of the address or specific program of any such political party or grouping. To us the term suggests an impassioned reader of the newspaper *PM.* Is a "radical democrat" opposed to Stalin's totalitarian regime, for example? Is he committed to socialist ideals or is he content to support the Roosevelt administration? Again, just what is a "radical democrat"?

As for Mr. Matthiessen's specific points:

1. Not only Miss Rukeyser's poem but many other pieces by writers whose subsequent careers we have not endorsed appeared in the early issues of PARTISAN REVIEW. The list of literary and political casualties is fairly long.

2. The poem in question is admittedly obscure, and Mr. Matthiessen offers no more than an alternative reading of it. The last stanza, with its reference to "war," we understood in a political

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sense; and certainly the "free fierce bird . . . speeding" bears an uncommon resemblance to an eagle. Whether the bird nailed up for target-practice has suffered torture or not strikes one as a pretty fine distinction. The reference to *The Turning Wind* was a figurative use of the title of the volume in connection with a particular poem. But in general it seems to us that *The Turning Wind* is marked throughout by a shift from Marxism to Americanism, and that the poem about the Stalinist organizer Ann Burlak is more than counterbalanced by poems about Gibbs, Chapman and Ives, and a general lack of relation to working-class allegiances.

3. The remark about Miss Rukeyser not being astonished by the Japanese was obviously not meant as a comment on her military acumen. It meant that Miss Rukeyser's poetic equipment was available, on short notice, for any patriotic emergency, and that *Wake Island,* with its apostrophes to the Marines and spectacular Americanism, was scarcely an organic development from her earlier work. We recall that in 1936, when Miss Rukeyser wrote anti-Japanese captions, she had not yet yielded to the super-class and nationalist approach to fascism so popular today.

4. Nobody questions the efficacy of propaganda or the right of a poet to make use of it. But surely a streamlined poster is hardly a substitute for political principles. Are we to assume that all is right with the aims and conduct of the war and all that is necessary is to prevail upon the big shots in Washington to allow us to state "our" case in better posters?

Now that we have reached the third and last round of the Rukeyser imbroglio, it should be clear that further quibbling about this or that detail of Miss Rukeyser's work is beside the point. We deplore the unduly personal tone in the original handling of the matter. But the "main issue" is the general pattern of Miss Rukeyser's career, and it is plain that her defenders are not disposed to see its implications, or, what is more important, to see it as a symptom of the backsliding so common among writers today and their irresponsible exploitation of political motives and ideas for purposes of literary aggrandizement.—*The Editors.*

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Variety

Pseudo - Folk

"THE folk tradition," Louise Bogan writes in a recent issue of PARTISAN REVIEW, "has become thoroughly bourgeoizified. At present there is no way for the artist to get at it, for it has been dragged into a region where nothing living or nutritious for his purposes exists." I want to extend this statement, or at least to specify it, in a few random notes.

Miss Bogan goes on to observe that in jazz, "American folk has never been more vigorous than at this moment." I entirely share her basic excitement over jazz and her basic hopes for it, but I think it is worth pointing out that roughly in ratio to the relative richness of its vigor, jazz has also suffered corruption. Even the best of it, I believe, has gone a long slope downward into an ever more unsophisticated sophistication, from the middle and late twenties to the present, and its progress and decay has the proliferant, geometrically increasing, frightening celerity of a galloping cancer. In 20 years, though formally it has never successfully transcended theme-and-variation, it has in some other respects covered roughly the ground which composed Western music took 400 years to go over. There is hope, of course, in the fact that all of these stages of jazz are still operating. If you are lucky you can still hear the oldest and purest kind of boogywoogy (as against its Café Society softenings and elaborations). And you can still hear, in the back country South and on the best records by Mitchell's Christian Singers, the incunabular sort of music which holds, to jazz, roughly the relation which the first century of sung polyphony holds to later Western music, both religious and secular. In street bands and in dives, now and then, and now and then for a moment on the "race records" of little-known and unknown musicians, you can hear true lyric jazz at the point when the deep-country and the town have first fertilized each other, and before imitation, ambition and the possibility of earning much of anything have destroyed it. But at the same time you can hear Ellington and understand why he is compared to Delius, even if the comparison depresses rather than pleases you; and you can hear nasty, tricky little midgets like Raymond Scott, "sophisticating" this extremely sophisticated art out of all relation to its source and, in the same gestures, achieving a once-over-lightly loving-up betrayal of the unaroused body of all the rest of music. And you can see, if you can stand it, the sort of people who enjoy this sort of decay, beside which men like Sinatra and Crosby are very respectable folk-artists indeed, being strictly, genuinely, sincerely and skilfully of their special kind and class.

The quintessence of this special kind of vicious pseudo-folk, in my opinion, is Hazel Scott. She plays the sort of jazz one could probably pick up, by now, through a correspondence school. She plays her "classics" with a slobbering, anarchic, vindictive, rushing affectation which any mediocre elementary piano teacher would slap her silly

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for. Her "swinging" of these "classics" is beyond invective. So is her own manner towards herself, her work, her audience; it makes the reading-manner of Edna Millay seem as decent at least as that of Little Egypt. As for the manner of those who accept and applaud her, it is, if possible, even more noisome; and is precisely what you must expect of the sort of "democrat" who, if he happens to read these notes, will wish to call me an anti-Negro, an anti-Semite, a Nazi, and whatever other overdigested derogatives remain in his vocabulary.

The pity of it is that Negroes themselves seem to be as often fooled by this sort of decadence as whites are. Miss Scott is a concentrated symbol of corruptive self-deceit upon whom I can waste little personal regret; but there are others, well-known and unknown, about whom I feel very badly. Paul Robeson, I am sure, is essentially a good man, and he has sometimes used his fortuitous power bravely and well on behalf of his race. But what can one think of the judgment of a man who, over and over and over, to worse and worse and worse people, has sung the inconceivably snobbish, esthetically execrable *Ballad for Americans*? And what has happened to our theatre critics that not one has observed that the Robeson-Webster production of *Othello,* and its record-breaking success, are both painfully dubious phenomena? What is one to think of the all but unqualified praise for *Carmen Jones;* and what is sorrier than to think of Negroes in the audience, and in the cast, who obviously enjoy this traduction and zoo-exhibition of their race as intensely as the whites do?

Tolstoy's opinion that the one reliable judge of art was a clean old peasant has never convinced me, but it has strongly moved, interested and unsettled me. But thanks to our nominal democracy and to the machines for universal manure-spreading which have done so much towards making it what it is, the "peasants" themselves, the sources of folk art, are if possible even more dangerously corrupted than the middle-class audience. Advertising is a kind of bourgeois-folk art to which they are quite as vulnerable as the target audience; and we may have a jew's-harp President yet. I remember how shocking and convincing it was, a few years ago, to play a ten-years-old and a new version of *West End Blues,* to some Negro high-school children. Both versions were by Louis Armstrong and both versions, in their very different ways, were good. But the older record was pure, sweet, unforcedly forceful, and great; and the new was adulterated, sugared-and-spiced, forcedly much less forceful, and sadly urbane, saved only by the musicians' essential innocence of their decline, and by their instinctive equilibrium and scarcely impaired skill, and by what remained of Armstrong's great warmth and talent. The children liked both records. But the one they played, over and over again, was the new one. It was in their idiom; and it was like the difference between Mozart and Wagner. They liked the elastic, leaping weave of the sumptuous saxophone choir which shrouded the whole performance in theatricality, false energy and stylish self-pity; and they loved Armstrong's last chorus, which no longer attempted the simple, squared, heartfelt declamation of the old one (though it was built in reference to it), but sloped and relaxed its dwindled passion along chromatics, elisions, incompletions

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—the popular-musical equivalent, in fact, to much of our poetry and prose, which is no longer capable of embodiment and of statement, but only of the evocation, the third-remove sensuous hint, the exquisite sub-detail, the romantic actor's catch-in-the-throat, the dying fall which the worst of such writers emphasize with dotdotdot.

I think this sort of deceit and decay is most disastrous and most conspicuous among Negroes, and I am interested again to observe that that is so in rough proportion as they are our richest contemporary source of folkart, and our best people en bloc. But it does not by any means stop with Negroes. The mock-primitive, demagogic style of the great bulk of WPA and leftist painting is a white disease, mainly, and seems to me almost entirely distinct in source and cause from the primitivism of Parisians or even the puniest of their imitators.

A white disease too is such a show as *Oklahoma,* the best of whose tunes have a certain pseudo-folksy charm, but whose accents, premises and success seem to me as questionable as those of Carl Sandburg, once he came to be "recognized," and in many respects before. Indeed we have a tradition for this sort of badness. The humor of men like Ward and Billings has always been spoiled for me not only by its low comic content but by its innocent-crafty, lucrative inverted snobbery; all but the best of Mark Twain is terribly tainted by his professional-Americanism; a man like Will Rogers is wholly explained by our national weakness for congratulating ourselves upon our special forms of disgracefulness; and there are not many of us who realize that Irving Cobb, C. B. Kelland, Edgar Guest and John Steinbeck have a great deal of shame in common; that the "talk-American" writer, the Common Man as normally represented in left-wing, liberal and tory fiction alike, and the pseudo-Biblical diction which chokes so much of our writing once we try to "dignify" the vernacular, are all at least as dangerously "literary," snobbish, affected and anti-human as the mock-Mandarin prose and the mock-Oxford speech of the self-caricatured Seaboard Anglophile.

On page 134 of *The Pocket Book of Quotations* you may read:

"I'm learnin' one thing, learnin' it all a time, ever' day. If you're in trouble, or hurt or need—go to the poor people. They're the only ones that'll help—the only ones."

On page 136:

"It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t'make it home
A heap o' sun an' shadder, an' ye sometimes have t' roam
Afore ye really 'preciate the things ye lef' behind,
An' hunger fer 'em somehow, with 'm allus on yer mind."

The latter passage is by Edgar Guest and is quoted from his poem, *Home.* The former is by John Steinbeck and is quoted from his novel, *The Grapes of Wrath.* The very small body of writing you might find which would not incriminate itself by comparison, which attempts to use the vernacular, and which at the same time shows good judgment both in using and in depriving itself of the Mandarin manner, is the prospect we have for the development of a popular literary art which I join Miss Bogan in looking towards.

(Postscript: I should explain that I have not seen *Othello, Carmen Jones* or *Oklahoma,* because I felt sure they would be bad. People who spoke well of the shows have reinforced me in this feeling

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and have helped give it detail. People who spoke ill of them, I regarded as even more trustworthy.)

With a sense of having very limited space I have made no attempt to analyze the pressures which seem to me to produce this pseudo-folk art and its audience and its character. I cannot hope to do so here, but do want to put down a few categories and suggestions.

1. The non-folk crosses to the folk or the pseudo-folk (Hazel Scott) or (again Miss Scott) presumes to "dignify" the folk by "classicizing" it, the "classical" by folksifying it. Here, in the artist and in the audience, there is an essential ignorance of, contempt for, or lack of confidence in, both ends or kinds of art; and there is, on both sides, through tacit semi-conscious mutual contempt, a lowering or full dismissal of ethical and moral standards.

2. The folk crosses to the non-folk: Paul Robeson; his pathetic vocal imitator at Café Society Uptown; Duke Ellington's more ambitious arrangements and compositions; the dreadful pseudo-savage, pseudo "cultured" dancing of Katherine Dunham and her troupe; Chaplin; Disney & Co.

3. The entertainer who relies chiefly on being "niggery": Miss Scott's grimaces of creative mock-orgasm and her exploitation of her bust and armpits; Cab Calloway; Cootie Williams' wahwahs and burrs; Armstrong's more frenzied skatting and his repeated high-notes, which used to run around 150 in a string. Both Negro and white audiences love this sort of thing, and pay for it. (White equivalents: the Professional American; Benton and Rockwell; the words of such Marc Blitzstein songs as *The Purest Kind of a Guy*).

4. A more refined, insidious version of the same thing, crossed with the idea that the folk are raised in dignity by becoming "classical": Robeson as Othello; the Negro men and white women of the audience who are excited by his scenes with Desdemona.

5. One aspect of the greater vulnerability of Negroes: their need, even more intense and more shut-in in its possible satisfactions than that of most "folk" whites, to rise both economically and in the world's love or, at least, adulation. Also the richness of their initial wares and the breadth of contrast for the audience-bourgeois, who feels a licensed loosening of his inhibitions—as he does also, say, in Latin countries—which he would never dare or live down among "his own kind."

6. One pseudo-saving grace of many pseudo-folk artists: contempt towards the audience which accepts and pays for their bad work. You will find this contempt in many Harlem entertainers and in many Hollywood writers—though I doubt that it explains the appalling camaraderies of the vernacular as employed in *Tunisian Victory* or in the most richly dreadful and fascinating of recent films, *Tender Comrade*. For that, you have to be hopelessly detached from, and benevolently interested in, and unconsciously patronizing towards "the folk," like Roosevelt.

7. One all but guaranteed effect, upon the folk-artist, of deliberately or through self-deceit corrupting his work: the ultimate destruction of his powers as an artist, instinctual, critical and merely shrewd.

8. One all but sure way towards this self-destruction: ever to work for a non-folk audience. It is perhaps particularly dangerous for a Negro artist to please moneyed

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whites. But in both races such notable exceptions as Jimmy Savo and Pete Johnson remind us that the sufficiently subsumed and powerful individual, and he alone, is indestructible.

9. One all but sure way, still, for the non-folk artist to destroy himself; trying to work for a folk audience or, still worse, for the great middle audience which now includes not only the middle class but most of the working class.

10. The folk artist and the non-folk artist have this in common: that their living—if they try to get it from their work—all but entirely depends upon an audience which, if the artist succeeds with them, virtually assures the destruction of his art.

11. The three present conceivable but very dangerous exceptions and possibilities: work in jazz; work in moving pictures; work in nominally "light" poetry. Just possibly also work in soap-operas.

12. How much of the great corrupted audience, if it were presented with any proper sort of uncorrupted work, would prove to be so incurably corrupt as, by its current tastes, it suggests it must be? (I suspect that a very great part of this audience is diseased chiefly with passiveness, and might be teachable.)

13. Who, except the artist capable of it, may be qualified to distinguish between "the proper sort" of work and the merely compromised, not to mention the slavish? A few critics and amateurs, I should think, and some of the general audience; but is there any such work around? The last I can confidently distinguish is that of Armstrong in the late twenties and of Chaplin in *The Circus*. Clair's best films are a beautiful blend of folk and non-folk art, but I doubt that even in France they were designed for, or deeply satisfied, the full folk audience. Preston Sturges' latest film reaches the great audience if only through its vivacity, but it is hardly a work of art, popular or unpopular; it fails through snobbery, cynicism, cowardice and a radical lack of love.

JAMES AGEE

The Martyred Mule of Adano

A READING of Mr. John Hersey's *A Bell for Adano* (Knopf) brings to mind some very ancient history. Southern Italy, and especially Sicily, has been for 30 centuries the classic land of invasion. A Sicilian will say "under the Bourbons" or "under the Saracens" as naturally as an American will speak of the Buchanan administration or an Englishman of the reign of George III. And to many Sicilians the coming of the House of Savoy in 1860 was only the most recent intrusion.

This unique historical experience of perpetual foreign domination has naturally created what must appear to others as very strange attitudes toward the conqueror and his governmental institutions. The Sicilian has reacted to the presence of alien rulers, so often oppressive and predatory, by developing and conserving his own popular and traditional *mores*, his unwritten laws and sometimes an unofficial government of his own. He has placed the center of his existence outside the pale of the law and has invested "crime" with an ideology and a code called *Omertà*. According to this code, which stands all "civilized" notions on their head, the villain of society is the policeman, the hero a Robin Hood sort of outlaw. One never has recourse

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to the courts to obtain redress for wrongs suffered; such matters are settled privately and whenever possible with a touch of dramatic artistry. Above all, one never squeals, or "sings," as the boys would have it. By a tenacious adherence to these devices, the Sicilian has succeeded in maintaining through 30 centuries of oppression an amazing sense of personal dignity and a vigorous spirit of independence. He is definitely not the type "to allow a fly to settle on his nose," as the saying goes.

Outwardly the Sicilian renders a measure of grudging and propitiatory homage to whatever governmental monster happens to be in power. If the monster runs amuck, there is always at hand the traditional weapon of the oppressed: insurrection. And the Sicilians have been rebelling steadily for 3000 years, at intervals roughly estimated at 15 years. Some of these revolts, like the Sicilian Vespers and the Palermo revolt of 1848, have made the headlines of world history.

Another consequence of this painful historical destiny has been the creation of a rather negative, stoical and sceptical attitude toward all manifestations of political life and, in fact, toward life in general. Your typical Sicilian, though well endowed with the Christian virtue of fortitude, certainly has no trace of the Pollyanna mentality; his daily comments are apt to be of a devastating and resigned bitterness. He will answer the greeting, "What's doing?" with, "The sardines are eating the anchovies."[1] His comments on political innovations are apt to be, "We were better off when we were worse off,"[2] or, "Joe rises and Basil falls; I gain nothing, I lose nothing."[3]

It is in the light of this background that Mr. Hersey's account of one episode in the Anglo-American invasion of Sicily needs to be examined. These amiable natives bearing trays of fruit and pitchers of heady local wine are, in a different sense, no less dangerous than the traditional Greeks bearing gifts. The newcomer is under the keen scrutiny of a people who have seen much of life.

Mr. Hersey's is essentially not a work of fiction but an excellent piece of reporting. His General Marvin, Major Joppolo, and Lieutenant Livingston are fictional characters whose resemblance to living people is all too evident. Mr. Hersey's picture of the sudden contact of two very dissimilar peoples is skilfully drawn. It is in interpreting the significance of this picture that we differ radically from the popular reviewers. Their optimism is misplaced, for to understand the inner meaning of the events related is to be left with an impression of unmitigated disillusion. To the proverbs quoted above one is now inclined to add, *Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini.*

Let us take a look at Mr. Hersey's *dramatis personae*: General "Hell-and-Goddamit" Marvin, a congenital muleskinner; Lieutenant Livingston, a supercilious Kent-Yale nincompoop and snob, who allows no "wops" to enter his office; Captain Purvis, a violent and lecherous boozehound; Sergeant Borth, strictly a hard guy; Privates "Chuck," "Polack" and "Bill," who

1. Chi si dici? Li sardi si mangiunu l'alici.

2. Si stava megghiu, quannu si stava peggiu.

3. 'Nchiana Peppi e scinni Brasi, nu mi nesci e nu mi trasi!

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demolish a valuable and ancient interior on three bottles of red wine: on Mr. Hersey's own reporting not a very sympathetic lot.

By contrast the generally amiable natives (the fascist ex-mayor excepted), and the Italian-American hyphenates, Major Joppolo and Sergeant Trapani, shine as if bathed in an angelic light. And this Major Joppolo is thoroughly credible; is he not essentially Fiorello LaGuardia, without the fireman's helmet? It is Major Joppolo who provides the one measure of hope in the whole episode. He is an Italian-American who is so Italian in sentiment that on landing he touches with his open hand the soil of his ancestors and exclaims, "It is like coming home." At the same time he is a genuine representative of what is most real in American democracy. Eventually he is betrayed and repudiated by the Hundred-Percenters. This seems to us unconsciously and prophetically symbolical. Are not the men who betrayed and repudiated Joppolo the men who may one day destroy all that is good in American life?

In the train of events arising from General Marvin's encounter with the somnolent driver of a mulecart on the highroad to Adano (an incident notoriously non-fictitious), the basic contrast between two irreconcilable cultural traditions works itself out to its inevitable conclusion. And throughout the action of the novel Major Joppolo belongs heart and soul with the people of Adano, remaining variously the wop, dago or meatball to his Anglo-Saxon associates.

What are we to make of all this? If the Marvins and the Livingstons represent the crudity and brutality of American life, what about the Joppolos? They, too, are America, after all; and so are the Herseys, with their good intentions and eagerness to understand the events they witness. It is only through the services of the latter that America can gain the good will of the oppressed peoples. The generals could well be left on the battlefield, and, if they are of "Hell-and-God-damit" Marvin's calibre, corralled with the cantankerous army mules.

Thus would the martyred mule of Adano be properly avenged!

JOSEPH CANNATA

Magazine Rack

FEW readers of PARTISAN REVIEW are likely to belong to that small but valiant coterie which takes its cue from *College English*, the official organ of the National Council of English Teachers. Its February number contains (along with more representative articles, such as "The Preterite-Present Verbs of Present-Day English") an article in which a Miss Winifred Lynskey gives Mr. John Crowe Ransom a rather rough going over. *This may be worth a little attention.*

Mr. Ransom, Miss Lynskey believes, falls into "serious inaccuracies," is a thoroughgoing Platonist, and is frequently guilty of wishing to "prove a point [rather] than be right." She is particularly repelled by the handling A. E. Housman receives from the critic. Ransom's "destruction" of the poem, in which Housman's deceased lightfoot lads and rose-lipt maidens load the poet's heart with rue, is accomplished, she feels, by an excess of literal analysis, and is, moreover, "inept" and "erroneous." It strikes me that here Miss Lynskey is less troubled by Ransom's strategies than by a desire to provide her own twenty-

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four sheet for a poem that is badly in need of it. Ransom's pertinacious dissection of the poem, on the other hand, reminds one somewhat of a Heidelberg encyclopedist reviewing a package of Tums.

Miss Lynskey will have none of Ransom's theory that Milton, in a publicity-seeking mood, deliberately wrote "Lycidas" as an irregular pastoral elegy. "I do not recall that Dryden, Addison, and Johnson, however they may have been irritated by some qualities of Milton, were disturbed by the ten unrhymed lines," says Miss Lynskey. "[The] irregularity does not seem to have disturbed many people in the last three hundred years." This is a new kind of tone for this type of argument.—"No one else has ever complained before about my rooms not being warm enough, Mr. Ransom. I've been running this place for thirty years, and never *once* have I heard a word of complaint about the lumps in the mashed potatoes." But then this is an indescribably mixed-up fight.

When Miss Lynskey moves in for the kill, Ransom's "Shakespeare at Sonnets" makes the shooting easy; for this essay, which Miss Lynskey informs us is one that "Mr. Ransom's friends urged him not to publish," strings together a considerable aggregation of blunders. Lack of space and a wave of ennui forbid a summary of Miss Lynskey's extensive exposures of Mr. Ransom's contradictions; but she leaves little doubt that Ransom's friends, in urging him to suppress "Shakespeare at Sonnets," were giving him sound advice. It is an essay in which contrarieties and fixed ideas arrive early and work overtime; yet it scarcely sums up Ransom. But then Miss Lynskey is here gathering only the best wood for her hatchet.

With the little magazines, Mr. Ransom's own *Kenyon Review,* after its valuable Henry James number, disgorges a winter offering in the shape of four poems by Genevieve Taggard. This would seem to be too many. Surely the *Saturday Review of Literature* people are irritably biting their lips at having to see these verses published in other pages than their own.

> Hush new child, how
> Give you good love?
> (You now so new.)

writes Miss T., and continues:

> (Hush, children, while mother
> sings.)

As if to make up for this, the *Kenyon* prints a distinguished new poem by Allen Tate; several extracts from Gide's Journals (on Valéry, Claudel and Proust) in an admirable translation by F. W. Dupee, which leave one unsatisfied only by the brevity of the selections; and a bright exegetical piece by C. G. Wallis on Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poète.*

View, with its December number, is well out of the little magazine class; it has become a 57th Street edition of a ritzier *Cue,* mixing surrealism with page after page of gallery notices and full-page *Vogue*-like ads for *White Flame* ("a breathtaking new perfume by Helena Rubinstein . . . to set his heart on fire") and for *Shocking Radiance,* Schiaparelli's new scent, plugged by a Dali drawing. In spite of its frequent foolishness and its well-heeled *enfant terrible* posturings, I should be sorry to see *View* come to an end. Once banned by the Post Office, the December issue is now permitted to go through the mails again, and persons in far-off Wichita and Salt Lake City may read a poem on pink paper by Charles Henri Ford,

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examine some *National Geographic*-like photographs of underground caverns, and fail to finish a noisy contribution by Nicolas Calas. "Uncreative, second-rate minds these modern herologists!' shouts Mr. Calas, dipping into his well-stocked exclamation-point supply, "—incapable of understanding either the situation of the masses or the feelings of the individual!"

Things are quieter in the pages of *Horizon,* which still arrives each month from London—a professional, serious, balanced job. Recent issues contained some excellent articles, such as Rudolph Friedmann's psychoanalytic study of Kierkegaard, Stephen Spender's comment on the humanist tradition in German letters, and a report on Soviet life by a Polish journalist. However, *Horizon* might profit by recalling Mr. Connolly's pre-blitz spirit of irreverence. The Winter issue of *Accent* has a good Cummings poem, and devotes the bulk of its space to a piece by Richard Levin and Charles Shattuck, arguing close Homeric parallels in Joyce's *Dubliners.* Now that Joyce is safely buried, the Publications of the Modern Language Association should be interested. A number of new magazines have recently appeared: *The Quarterly Review of Literature,* introducing a new note —a purple cover; Dwight Macdonald's *Politics;* a critical journal, *The American Bookman;* Norman Macleod's *Maryland Quarterly;* and a mimeographed publication from California called *Circle,* enclosing Henry Miller. A number of other little magazines still function. Some of these perform the not uninteresting feat of assembling examples of criticism, poems, *and* stories of an exact degree of intellectual emaciation. This is not so easy a trick to bring off.

The reading of Kay Boyle's last novel induced in Mr. Edmund Wilson a sharp nostalgia for *transition* and *This Quarter.* It is a nostalgia that is currently stirring in many a literary bosom. (A number of the current little magazines would make one nostalgic for *The Yellow Book.*) Some intellectuals have not been content to limit themselves to the boundaries of this understandable response, but threaten at any moment to sigh longingly for the pleasant days of Mr. Coolidge, Sacco and Vanzetti, and Miss Millay's middle period. Yet the sense of fresh explorations perpetually going forward, the dissidence, the experimentation, above all the international spirit that animated the little magazines of the twenties, were of great importance. They survive only in a few caves here and there; and even the occupants of these underground hideouts have about them an air of overcharged desperation and a cultivated awareness that they are functioning with little help from those who appear to themselves as colleagues.

Most of the gifted editors of our time are dead or have assigned themselves roles in disappearing acts—Ford (Ford Madox, not Charles Henri), Margaret Anderson, Harriet Monroe; have given up editing (Eliot, Wyndham Lewis); or are wanted by the Allied police force (Pound). As for writers, a whole generation of "promising talents" examines its graying hairs and pouchy eyes in the cubicles of the O.W.I., the Time & Life Building, and in the scenario department of M.G.M. Many of them have not only succeeded in making complete adaptations to these realms, but have reconditioned them into closed worlds of value.

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I have said little about the fiction and poetry in the new magazines. Most of these offerings are repeat performances from the recent past's extended run of creative stalemate and debility. There is a good deal to be said against the intellectual product of the twenties; yet those writers who established themselves in that period, and who still exist, reminding us occasionally of creatures from another age—Cummings, Eliot, Stevens, Williams, etc.—remain our most gifted avantgarde contributors. The competition from those who followed is a sporadic affair only. If that was a Wasteland and they were the Lost Generation, then what is this moldy milieu in which we find ourselves; and what are we?

WELDON KEES

Graham Greene and the Intelligentsia

FOR THE last twenty years the detective story has been the official bedside book of the tired brain worker. Where hunting was once the sport of kings, the vicarious man-hunt has become the sport of presidents, college professors, economists, cabinet ministers, and literary men; and the small detective-story reader, like the small business man who alleges in extenuation of his own sharp practice the habits of the vast corporations, has the example of Yeats or Eliot or Roosevelt ready in his defense. But the detective-story reader, insofar as he is an intellectual, has always been uneasy; he is ashamed of his predilection (or is it a vice?) and seeks to justify it, not only by precedent, but, at length, on esthetic grounds; he makes a virtue of necessity, a literary cult of what is really a pastime, praises Hammett for his realism, Dorothy Sayers for her bluestocking wit and learning, Margery Allingham for her neo-romantic sensibility, so that you would have thought, to hear people talk a few years ago, that these detective story writers were being read exclusively for their style.

Graham Greene is God's gift to this group of readers. He has silenced forever the embarrassing question: But is it art? With Miss Sayers, Miss Allingham, and the others, there was always that doubt; the classical prose, the learned allusions, the decadent detective, were all of the surface; underneath the slipcover were the old springs of the detective story plot. Graham Greene was more radical. He discarded the framework of the detective story for a machine more old-fashioned, the thriller; and on the principle that has been working in interior decoration, where Victorian furniture is discovered to be more modern than modern furniture, and in philosophy, where St. Thomas Aquinas is found to be more chic than John Dewey (you regress in order to advance and nothing is more out of style than last year's hat), he produced a series of modern and highbrow novels under the formal discipline of Edgar Wallace and E. Phillips Oppenheim. And into this scheme so bizarre, so inexplicable, so amazing, so different from the rational universe of Lord Peter Wimsey and Hercule Poirot, who never for an instant, even in their most baffling cases, lose faith in "the little grey cells" of the brain, he precipitated the contemporary man, bred out of Dostoievsky, Eliot, and Kafka, out of Freud and the Spanish War, who went to school with Auden, and whose remote ancestors are Hamlet and Orestes.

The moral problem he moved to

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the very center of the narrative; his heroes are tracked down not only by the police, the Gestapo, the Communists, but by the Eumenides of conscience, by guilt, by the loss of God, the sense of moral implication in the crime that is the modern world; and in each novel the climax comes when the hunted man rounds on his pursuers, to meet his destiny head-on and find either freedom or death. Theoretically, this all sounds very wonderful, and the sensational incongruity between matter and form Greene justifies as an esthetic parable of man's predicament in society today: the sensitive human being is set loose in a society of killers, he is obliged to take part in a bad mystery drama conceived in the brains of lunatics; "the world" he tells us, "has been remade by William Le Queux." At first sight, this is convincing enough; we have all experienced this thrill of horror and incredulity; the paratroopers, the Fifth Column, the Moscow trials, the Gestapo torture chambers, the saboteurs in their rubber boat have taxed not only our belief but our sense of esthetic propriety; life, we feel, has really gone off the tracks in the imitation of art.

It is this sense of embarrassment that is the central emotion of Greene's work. "This can't be happening to me," his characters are, in effect, continually telling themselves, like the Englishman who, at the end of Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes,* when the Nazis begin to fire on the train, says to his companion, "I can't help thinking there must be some natural explanation for this," but, despairing of it, picks up a gun. Greene has other themes: one character is obsessed by the emotion of pity, one by the death of a beloved wife, one by an unfortunate religious education, one by drink. But these themes, these obsessions are unreal; neither pity, nor grief, for example, is a major emotion; one cannot imagine a character whose behavior is wholly governed by pity, and one feels that Greene, in pretending that this is possible, is being pious and insincere.

The embarrassment, however, is real, and it is perhaps this embarrassment, which he shares with other intellectuals, that has made him their current darling, so that he is spoken of everywhere in the same breath with Waugh and Elizabeth Bowen, and even a critic as strict as Morton Zabel has written of him in *The Nation*: "His characters pursue a conscience implicated in the full mystery and terror of their natures. . . . Sustains a dialectic between the oblivion of naturalism and the absolute tests of moral selfhood. . . . One of the most promising collaborations between realism and spirituality that have recently appeared in fiction. . . . He stands at the threshold of major fiction." Of all these remarks, only the last, it seems to me, is applicable—Graham Greene stands indeed, at the threshold of major fiction, with his hat in his hand, and Mr. Zabel and Greene's other admirers overstep the necessities of hospitality in inviting him so eagerly in.

The truth is, Graham Greene is an ersatz serious novelist. He carries with him all the baggage of the serious writer—the themes out of Eliot and Kafka, the bad conscience, the political awareness, the nightmares, the religious scruples, the portentous use of the colon. In each of his novels, he sets out this baggage, but it never gets unpacked. All of Greene's seriousness operates in the realm of rhetoric.

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Problems appear under their names, but not in their substance. It is the reader's memory that does the esthetic work. A hero is called "D." and we remember Kafka; the resemblance ends there, but everything is moving so fast that we do not perhaps notice this, and we close the book with the illusion that we have been dealing with the Kafkan man. Certain key words, like "innocence," "pity," "goodness," "lost," "abandoned," "childhood," "tenderness," "adolescence," recur again and again in every possible context and invoke in our minds the whole repertory of elegiac emotions connected with the Garden, the loss of innocence, the Fall, while in actuality this profound theological subject has never been treated at all and we have been chasing about London with German spies at our heels. Words with churchly connotations are used gratuitously in similes, with the same slightly hypnotic effect. For example, in *The Ministry of Fear,* a maid comes to the door: "Her face was talcumed and wrinkled and austere like a nun's. . . . The old maid watched them with the kind of shrewdness people learn in convents." Why? The likeness is never explained; it was invented for the religious *frisson.* To read one of Greene's novels is to put oneself in the position of one of Pavlov's dogs; it is all stimulus and response; the bell rings and the reader supplies his own bone.

What exists in Greene's novels when the rhetoric is peeled off is a fast-moving, improbable plot plus some fine descriptions of landscape and buildings, plus an acute sense of the literary man's embarrassment before the trashy material of modern life. And this embarrassment, which appears to be the source of his work, is at the same time its destroyer. For the real novelist cannot regard the whole of modern life as unassimilable artistically; he begins in fact where Greene leaves off; he makes believable what at first glance seems unbelievable; he humanizes the horrors, the melodrama, and the absurdity. When Evelyn Waugh makes the bad hat, Basil Seal, turn into a Commando, he performs a service of illumination; he rescues the actual Commandos from the romantic boy's book that Lord Louis Mountbatten and the newspapers and Noel Coward have left them in and restores them to credibility and human status. But Graham Greene can only add his own well-written footnote to the theory that the book of life, circa 1940, is a pot-boiler whose Author is Edgar Wallace.

MARY MCCARTHY

Choose Your Quotes

The Life of the Mind!

"Joyce was a man of great gifts, unfortunately turned to essentially destructive ends. It is tragic that the last years of his life, and all his learning, should have been devoted to the production of "Finnegans Wake," which, when all is said and done, is a mockery of what the English tongue has accomplished through centuries of communicated thought. (J. Donald Adams, in *The New York Times,* Jan. 18, 1944).

The Immanence of Uncle Joe

"The Russians have not thought of themselves as religious. The Russians call themselves *Realists.* But it is easy to see that if God is reality and if the Russians have made

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contact with reality, then the Russians must be in contact with God and that therefore the Russians have of all people on the earth today come to the place where, if they sing and pray, their prayers and hymns can have meaning." (Kenneth Leslie, in *The Protestant,* Dec. 1943)

What War Novels Are Made Of

"I have not come across a single American novel which tries to say a word of truth about this war: those of our novelists who are concerned with the war either write elaborate fictions about this happy land worth dying for or take out their patrioteering in forced recreations of the past, intended to prove that America through all its history has been whole-woven of the purest idealisms. (Diana Trilling, in *The Nation,* Jan. 22, 1944)

The Progress of Cultural Bolshevism: A Communication

CULTURAL Bolshevism is with us again, and I thought the readers of PARTISAN REVIEW might want to hear how it is progressing on this side of the Atlantic. It has become by now such a common phenomenon that we ought to be able to predict with considerable accuracy what events and opinions will follow it. We have Italy and Marinetti, Germany and Rosenberg, France and de Montherlant, from which to cast the horoscope of Brooks, MacLeish and America, or Elton, Noyes and England. For my part, I feel that it is the natural product of any state of national policy and social disorganization so gross that artists are forced to protest against it (and for which the public demands a scapegoat); and it is not a very difficult maneuver to make the objectors and the scapegoat coincide. Here in England, at any rate, it has a very real object in diverting middle-class anger away from the Tory party and focussing it upon writers and painters whose work is already unpopular with that class.

This is what has occurred here since I last wrote to you (PARTISAN REVIEW, March-April 1943): I said then that the younger writers were the butt of a three-pronged attack, at least one prong of which came from the traditionalist poets and journalist-critics of the quasi-literary press. The new offensive, which was launched soon after and which is still going on, began with a book by Lord Elton, called *St. George or the Dragon?* The dragon, as you may have guessed, was the entire body of experimental writing and painting, from the end of the Kipling period down. Elton, you may know, is, or was, a director of the BBC, and so far as his library subscription permitted he covered the ground pretty thoroughly. There is a good deal of similarity between his list of decadents and Rosenberg's—most of the people who were proscribed in Germany, and whom Elton happened to have heard of, including Zweig (Arnold), who demoralized England with his pacifist novel *Sergeant Grischa,* Proust, Joyce, Lawrence, and I think a few painters (I have not the book at hand, so I am open to correction) were at the bottom of the rot. They sapped the will of English youth to side with St. George, and very nearly left us with a public that would not agree to follow the government into a patriotic war. (In London in 1939 one had a very strong impression, perhaps erroneous, that the war was forced on the

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government by the public, but perhaps this is because the public had not read any Zweig.)

Elton's book was a pretty effective rallying-point for the traditionalist decontamination squad; and there was something of a BBC program against "advanced art," coinciding with the sacking of a few anti-war musicians and script writers. However, the public managed to put a stop to that. Where Elton made a mistake was in attacking a living writer instead of confining himself to less heavily defended targets—and in the following issue of *Horizon* he received from Sir Osbert Sitwell what must rank as the most notable literary kick in the pants of this generation. I cannot quote it here, but I strongly recommend it as a piece of invective. After describing Elton as a crocodile-bird, and several less polite things, Sitwell wrote a short analytical study of philistinism, and invited further adversaries, and got none. There was a long lull, during which such sniping as there was came from the Left, most of it either from Communists (against writers who, when Russia entered the war, failed to declare it kosher and non-imperialist), or from people who were genuinely concerned at the absence of popular interpretative art and hoped that the intellectuals could create popular culture from above, as it were. But it is only in the last forthnight that a major action has developed, again with a book as rallying-point.

The book is *The Edge of the Abyss,* by Alfred Noyes, C.B.R., LL.D., Litt. D., author of *The Flower of Old Japan, Drake, Aspects of Modern Poetry* and a good many other volumes. It was promtly reviewed in *John of London's Weekly,* the *Zwölfte Uhr Blatt* of the movement, by Lord Elton, under the title, "An Angry, Urgent Book." The tactics have been modified by experience, and possibly by some staff-work. Heavily defended and live targets, except for Wells, Shaw and Edmund Wilson, are left severely alone. The main objectives are Joyce, Proust, Lawrence, and the pseudo-intellectuals. These last seem to be a very good move—intellectuals are about as dangerous as copperheads, and one need only add "pseudo" to make them cobras. Briefly the thesis is this: The work of Joyce and Proust is not merely the infantile drivel of lunatics and charlatans—it is something even more sinister, because, somewhere in the literary dunghills which these writers managed to erect, there is implicit an amoral, atheistic propaganda the intention and effect of which was to corrupt the youth of the country and break the tradition and "the integrity of the ordinary people of Britain, the bourgeoisie so despised by the fashionable coteries of the day; the quiet and forgotten man who still read Dickens and kept his word and, more often than not, believed in God."

Now I am ready to go a good deal of the way with Noyes—when he says that Joyce's more gibberish works are overrated as literature, or that the sort of drivel by Wells which passed as criticism of Christian ethics and doctrine did harm, if only as poor logic—but the kernel of the matter is not that. It is that Joyce and Proust, *by virtue of their form and technique,* were depraved, and therefore morally contemptible. Gosse is quoted to prove that *Ulysses* ("that foul chaos") is a symptom of "a vicious, half-witted second childhood" (Elton), and the colossal humbug of critics who see anything in Proust is scarified.

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Noyes brings very considerable talents to this job. He is an expert on esthetics, for he can detect no vestige of form or of verbal power in *Ulysses* or in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*; on ethics, for the flaming assertions of personal responsibility to mankind which were the essence of Joyce and Lawrence are to him anti-Christian and a root-cause of fascism; and on the limits which artistic form cannot legitimately, without proscription on moral grounds, transcend.

I do not think that in the face of these pretensions it is irrelevant to examine the pretender's achievement. I doubt if a free vote among writers here, traditionalist and experimental, to determine the identity of the worst living English poet would show any serious opposition to Noyes' title. If he or Elton or a committee of a hundred Noyeses and a thousand Eltons could have written one line of *Dubliners* or *Swann* it would be less of a pill to swallow. Elton blames the bitterness of non-fighting men who are ashamed of themselves; I blame the rancor of poetasters who see praise accorded to work they cannot understand. What makes me hopping mad is the assumption that there is a limit beyond which experiment is wicked in itself, and also the facility with which the real abyss—and it is a deadly one—is blithely put down to Joyce and his "decadence." It is true that we are in an age of vicious second childhood, or half-witted sadism—witness Warsaw, Lidice, Hamburg, Berlin—and we were warned by every one of the artists whom these two clowns are kicking. But no! "I happened to be present at Kipling's funeral. . . . None of the 'literary' world was there, though there were one or two good writers. But the Abbey was packed from end to end with *men*: men who had done things, who had built ships and governed countries: men with minds of their own."

I think the pogrom is beginning, and it will go on. The very badness of the middle-class conscience over the Great Anti-Fascist Crusade for Badoglio, Savoy and Toryism will keep it going. Within a few days of Noyes, a letter appeared in the *Times* signed by twelve painters, protesting that CEMA was using public money to send decadent modern art on tour, and even daring to employ lecturers to teach people to like it. The decadent art is presumably Piper, Moore, Ravilious, Spencer, Nash and the rest. The most interesting thing about this letter, as a replier pointed out, is that its signatories have an average age of over seventy. We shall see. What amazes me is that nobody has yet announced that the Jews are behind the whole dirty business. That is the revelation to come; anti-Semitism has not yet joined hands with the purists but it will.

To wind up, a personal experience that may amuse you and which is not irrelevant. I was summoned by the BBC a few weeks ago to confer on the possibility of my giving a book talk. I was most civilly interviewed, after an explanation that I must not be too highbrow—"of course, if you were talking to India it would be different, but we have no intelligent public here." I was asked to name some books and did so. "But," said the interviewer, "you've not mentioned any war books." I explained that I felt I had better keep off them on policy grounds. Why? Because I was a pacifist. The interviewer's jaw dropped. "This is terrible—we probably can't use you at all—there's a directive against people-

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not-wholly-in-sympathy being allowed to broadcast on any subject. . . . But if we can't ask you to broadcast I must have your word that you will treat the matter in strict confidence." I told him that he could blacklist me, but I was damned if I'd hush it up for him.

The way in which youngsters straight from college are impounded to write scripts (I met one a few days ago, tremendously proud to be a producer, and struggling with a whitewashing script about the Boer War) makes me think that I am not the first person to get what I believe you call the bum's rush. The number of people who are willing to touch propagandist work with a bargepole, except for Eric Linklater, Louis MacNeice, and your Mr. Robert Sherwood (whose *There Shall Be No Night* is running here, transferred arbitrarily from Finland to Greece in deference to Russia) and others of the genus Congressional Librarian is pretty small. As Cummings put it, "A Salesman is an It that stinks Excuse me. . . . " MacNeice and Linklater appear sincere, though their work has suffered. I won't vouch for the rest. A man called Skinner has just written a long poem, calling Churchill "Stern foe of Hitler and of Platitude," which is being acclaimed by the Pogrom Party—perhaps it represents the new literature.

ALEX COMFORT

A Victorian Novel

IT IS characteristic of the more robust Victorian novelists that they let their scenes and creatures get out of hand. The obvious formal considerations came last for such a writer as Trollope, and he was always ready to sacrifice the planned shape of a work, a loose thing at best, to the resistances and deflections he met in the writing of it. As with Dickens, a character that insisted strongly enough could snatch more than its allotted space from his pen. Thus, by the curious vitality one of its personae arrogates to himself, Trollope's *The American Senator* ascends into a realm the author may not have planned to enter. It becomes one of the most interesting novels in English, and that it has received so little recognition as such can only be blamed on its deficiencies of form, rocked as it is from side to side by three intermittent narratives which barely connect with each other in any but a thematic sense—and that sense hard to discern.

The primary and serious narrative is the halting romance—halting, because it takes place, so to speak, in Purgatory—of Reginald Morton and Mary Masters, a Victorian set piece only partly redeemed by its incidentals. Reginald is a studious recluse, son of gentry, embittered for some inadequate reason, chaste, intense, pipe-smoking, Byronic-proud: a Bronte type whom Trollope is not sufficiently interested in to rescue from what was already fictional desuetude. Reginald walks through his part like a dummy. Larry Twentyman, a mildly prosperous young farmer, is desperately in love with Mary, daughter of the town lawyer and compendium of the negative virtues. She prefers Reginald, who is much more romantic, in spite of being forty. For it was improbable in Trollope's time that anyone under the upper middle class should appear romantic unless he or she were a criminal. But as a character in fiction Larry has all the vitality his rival lacks. He does not have

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to function as a hero: his difficulties are organic, are not going to be solved by a straightening out of misunderstandings. He is in his fix for good, and the Victorian pathos of that fix is lingered over. Larry suffers in the limbo reserved by the English for those who are not quite gentlemen or ladies nor altogether plebeian either. "There was a little bit of dash about him—just a touch of swagger—which better breeding might have prevented." Reginald objects through clenched teeth to Larry's billycock hat, and the wrong as well as the right people call him by his first name. The real anguish of Larry's hopeless suit is the suspicion that snobbery is at the bottom of his rejection. The author, willing to allow for it but not to admit it, tries to invalidate the suspicion by having Mary's vulgar stepmother voice it comically—and by making Reginald's dead mother the daughter of a Canadian innkeeper, for which reason Reginald himself is a victim of snobbery. But the suspicion only flowers the more; Trollope pours too much independent life into his creatures, and the harangues of Mary's stepmother are the liveliest speeches in the novel. Trollope really assents to the snobbery and knows that his readers do too—not in principle perhaps but certainly in practice, and he was the good novelist he was because he did not allow his principles to deviate too far from practice. The readers know also that another two hundred and fifty pounds a year would have made Larry a gentleman, swagger or no swagger.

The secondary plot, Lady Arabella Trefoil's hunt for a husband within the lists of English social form, takes place in Hell and is the richest vein in the book, as episodes in Hell usually are. It is written with a freer hand, since interclass relations are not involved, only the criticism of an upper class on its own terms. The depravity of European life being for Trollope nothing so esoteric as to be revealed by the stripping away of successive veils, the baseness of the Trefoil family is presented straightforwardly. Trollope was more interested in the phenomenon itself of evil than in the principle at its root. He lacked that horror of the specific sin which functioned for James almost as the shaping rule of fiction. The latter saves the reader from the local experience of evil by transforming its revelation into a cathartic exercise of the aesthetic faculties; such an exercise delivers perhaps more of the force of evil in general. Nothing was remoter from Trollope. In one sense he aimed at corrective criticism of a particular society, in another he assumed the role of a spokesman of accepted opinion. But first and last he was a yea-sayer, a connoisseur of things as they are. It is because of his intense sense of the actual, his avidity for social facts and acts, and because of his feeling for his art, which to him meant substance rather than form, that we can derive a more fundamental criticism of society from his work than he himself seems to have intended.

Nearing thirty and poor for her station, Lady Arabella lives on her social connections. The notions of comfort and prestige inculcated in her by her milieu give her little other alternative than to hunt for a rich and wellborn husband. Trollope would have held her entitled to one, perhaps, if her need were not so desperate. It is hard to tell whether her bad character comes from her need or vice versa. Lady

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Arabella "rather liked being hated by women and did not want any man to be in love with her—except as far as might be sufficient for the purposes of marriage." Her ambition was to be "one who might be sure to be asked everywhere even by the people who hated her." When she appears on the scene she is engaged to John Morton, a diplomat, squire of Bragton, and Reginald's cousin. But catching sight of the sporting Lord Rufford, a more spectacular prize, she changes course and rides into what is eventually a horrible situation. The lord, one of those stupid, successful, and attractive persons all societies find indispensable, almost proposes to Arabella in a moment of exuberance. Her effort to use the rules of Victorian social form to press the lord into accepting the consequences of an actual proposal lead her through a circle in Inferno called humiliation. The moral justice of fiction deprives her of the lord but rewards her for a momentary impulse of pity towards John Morton—who eliminates himself by dying—with an upright and wellborn, if not rich, husband. Thus Arabella's episode, coming under the heading of satirical comedy, ends on an unexpectedly cheerful note.

The morality is of money. One notices that sinners as well as victims in Trollope's novels almost always suffer from financial or social insecurity: they are either the low-born rich or the blue-blooded poor. Their limitations are imposed by society rather than inherent in their natures. And the moral of most of Trollope's fiction is that people should abide by their limitations. (In drafting his novels, Trollope would assign an income in exact figures to most of his characters, as part of their essential definition—and also of the process of making them come alive.)

The character who gets out of hand is the American senator himself, the honorable Elias Gotobed (the name is one of the worst Trollopisms) from the state of "Mickewa," visiting England to study conditions there. The part he plays is peripheral to the two main narratives, and paradoxically, his share of space shrinks even as his abstract importance grows. Yet his story, which conducts us into the Paradise matching the Purgatory and Hell of the other two plots, gives the novel an ambiguity and depth of irony rare in Victorian English fiction. What begins as a standard 19th Century caricature of the Yankee swells gradually to a figure of Reason incarnate, stalking and castigating the English land. The senator's twang fades away, his cigar dwindles and finally disappears. At the last all we see is purity and all we hear is logic. The author's attitude to the senator is highly ambiguous. He seems to have been intended primarily as a mouthpiece for Trollope's own strictures on English society; secondarily as a caricature. But the two aims are in contradiction. Criticism is attributed to the senator with which it is obvious that Trollope does not agree, designed as it is to characterize the senator rather than the objects of his criticism. But it is very difficult to draw the line between this and the criticism with which the author does agree. Thus the criticism as well as the senator's personality attains an objectivity beyond the author's control. The senator may appear a bit simple-minded to those who acquiesce in what seem the necessary anomalies of any social order, but his simple-mindedness is such as to

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make ridicule pointless and in the end remind the more sophisticated of their own insensitivity.

The senator is qualified to act as the representative American by having his opinions compounded of Jeffersonianism, Abolitionism, Radical-Republicanism, Rationalism, and Utilitarianism, a combination turning out to be much more radical than the author expected. The senator uses such phrases as "the demand for progressive equality which is made by the united voices of suffering mankind," marvels at the docility of the English lower classes, and is reluctant to admit "that one man should be rich and another poor is a necessity in the present imperfect state of civilization. . . . " He is the type of the anti-aesthetic man whose eye is so intently on the ball, on the principle, the universal, that he has become obtuse to all particular instances, moods, shades, tones, and the reactions of the people he talks to. The type can be depressing, but it also compels our respect. Trollope, with his relish for the petty, feels some guilt towards the senator—goes as far as to allow him to attack his own beloved sport of fox-hunting on grounds well-taken. And since fox-hunting can be defended only aesthetically, Trollope can file his rebuttal only by writing two or three superb hunting scenes.

The senator arouses widespread animosity by his outspoken surprise at the injustices and anomalies of the English social order and by siding with a disreputable farmer in his litigation with Lord Rufford for indemnity for crops eaten by the lord's game pheasants. Finishing his study, which he has carried out with great conscientiousness, he gives a sensational lecture in London at which he tells a distinguished and overflowing audience just what he has found wrong with England: namely, the irrationality of Englishmen. The audience riots and he is unable to finish. "He had not much above half done yet. There were the lawyers before him, and the Civil Service, and the railways, and the commerce of the country, and the labouring classes." But no matter, he is already apotheosized, and floats high above the rest of the Trollopian world, drawing reluctant admiration from it. By dint of having been consistently exaggerated in one direction, the senator passes beyond the grotesque and reaches the highest seriousness.

His Americanism turns out to be a kind of moral imperialism, quite different from the Americanism of Henry James's pilgrims, who carry their innocence to Europe humbly. But the senator does have a few Jamesian twinges, just to prove that he is not a simple, silly, holy, irrelevant man with no awareness of human susceptibilities. He writes home of his admiration of the "easy grace" and "sweet pleasant voices and soft movements" of English aristocrats, and that there is a "pleasure in associating with those here of the highest mark which I find hard to describe."

The senatorial flourish excepted, the book ends weakly. Reginald discovers that he loves Mary, and they get married—but these two were a dead loss from the beginning. Poor Larry's fate is left in suspension. Lady Arabella goes off to Patagonia with her husband on a minor diplomatic mission. But her story had seemed to be working up to some more exciting denouement, which would have left it ringing in the reader's memory. Patagonia is not enough. In the end only the senator remains. Trol-

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lope's inferiority to Dickens lies in his surplus of realism, in that satisfaction with "the normal machinery of experience" of which Sadleir, his biographer, approvingly accuses him. It is the price he pays for his particular virtues. His fiction answers too well at times an important but crippling demand made on the novel: that it be the recital of events made more interesting in their texture than in their resolutions.

CLEMENT GREENBERG

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